



Thursday, January 14, 2016

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PET CAT OWNERS LIVING IN FEAR

Report by Marion Brennan

DISTRAUGHT pet owners fear their cats are being targeted and killed after 23 have been lost from three streets in the Black Country in just two years.

Some have vanished without trace while some cats have died after being poisoned with anti-freeze.

Most of the cats have disappeared from three streets in Cradley Heath.

Foster parent Kate Antill, of Linton Road, has lost seven cats — three from poisoning and four which are missing.

The 49-year-old mother-of-four said: "It's heartbreaking to lose so many cats in so such a short space of time, and it's upsetting for my children."

"They have seen the effects of anti-freeze on the cats — it's a horrible way to die."

"They don't understand why people would hurt their cats."

Kate Antill with Tilly "We fear what has happened to the others. It is too much to believe they haven't also been harmed."

Angela Gelencser, aged 60, founder of the Halesowen-based charity Wild Acre Rescue, which re-homes cats, also lost her cat Bramble.

She believes some people have become so irritated about cats straying into their gardens that they deliberately leave anti-freeze out for them to drink.

Spiteful

She said: "What is happening to cats in the area is awful."

"Spiteful people who hate cats using their gardens poison them and mistreat them but they are living creatures and need to be respected."

"I urge all cat owners to get their pet neutered and microchipped, as that acts as proof of ownership."

Ms Anthill, who has just one of her cats left, Tilly, said at least 15 cats had vanished, and a Facebook page set up to try and trace the missing cats indicated a further eight in the area were also missing.

She said: "We're desperate for someone to help us. We've reported it to the police and they say they can't help."

"We're desperate for someone to come forward and help us, we just don't know who to turn to."

She added: "Our next step is to contact a pet detective agency in the hope they can find out what is happening."



STRIKING DOCTORS STAND FIRM DESPITE CALL



Junior doctors on the picket line at Sandwell Hospital striking in protest at proposed new contracts being imposed on them

STRIKING junior doctors in Sandwell were told to leave the picket line and return to work after hospital bosses declared a 'major incident'. The majority refused to go back to work at Sandwell General Hospital despite the plea from their bosses.

They were asked to return to work after a reported incident of 'considerable and unusual pressure' at the hospital, following a number of high admissions. However, while some of the doctors on the picket line did return to work, the majority continued their industrial action on Tuesday.

The plea sparked a war of words with the doctors' union, the British Medical Association, which said unnecessary pressure had been put on strikers by hospital bosses.

Five ops were called off at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

For the first time since 1975, junior doctors walked out in a strike against the proposed new contracts being imposed by Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, who has called on the BMA to return to the negotiating table.

Junior doctors also took to the picket line outside Russells Hall Hospital as part of a

national day of strike action which saw 49 day-case procedures cancelled at the Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust.

Vicky Lacey, a foundation year two doctor at Russells Hall, said: "This is the only way we can have our voices heard. The Government has backed us into a corner. The contract they are putting forward is unfair and unsafe for patients. We all work really long hours. They just want to increase the hours but they have also got to increase the workforce."

A fresh round of talks were due to start today (Thursday).

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Halesowen Chronicle Thursday, January 14, 2016

Pool safety review after father's death



Father-of-four Deon Mullings

DUDLEY Council say experts will look at whether any action is required at Middle Pool at the Fens Pool Nature Reserve in Pensnett, Dudley, following the death of Deon Mullings.

Mr Mullings failed to resurface after going into the water to retrieve his daughter's ball in July last year when a family outing turned into tragedy.

Mr Mullings, of Holly Hall, had been playing ball games with his daughters near the pool.

It is not the only incident to have happened in the Middle Pool area of the nature reserve. In 2011 a schoolboy had

to be rescued after falling 25ft down a bank into the water.

Children regularly play by the pool and it is now being considered whether better public protection is needed, such as fences or new warning signs.

Coroner

The council's environmental boss Hilary Bills said experts visited the council-managed site after the incident to see if any immediate changes were needed.

She added that bosses were now waiting for information from the coroner

surrounding the circumstances of Mr Mullings' death before deciding on the next moves to be taken. The council is in the process of preparing a report following the tragedy.

The 35-year-old father-of-four was pulled from the water by rescuers and was taken to Birmingham's Queen Elizabeth Hospital but could not be saved.

Councillor Bills said: "Following this very tragic event officers visited the site to see if any improvements could be made to the area and we are currently awaiting information from the coroner in order to finalise this review."

Holocaust survivor to give speech at service

A WOMAN who survived a Nazi concentration camp will be visiting Dudley to speak at the town's annual Holocaust memorial service.

Susan Pollack, who was born in 1930 in Felsögöd, Hungary, was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau in May 1944 with her family.

Born Zsuzsanna Blau, she and her brother survived the Holocaust but more than 50 of their relatives did not. Susan's mother was murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau but the teenager survived ten weeks at the camp before being sent to Germany as slave labour.

Susan married another survivor and now lives in London, a mother of three and grandmother to six.

The service, organised by Dudley North MP Ian Austin and Dudley College Students' Union, has become a fixture in the town's calendar since first held eight years ago.

Hundreds of people heard Holocaust survivor Hannah Lewis describe her experiences of Adampol concentration camp at last year's service.

The commemoration has been organised with the support of the Holocaust Educational Trust.

It will conclude with the ceremonial lighting of the Candle of Remembrance as Mayor of Dudley Councillor Steve Walther leads faith leaders in a two-minute silence to honour the victims of the Holocaust.

The service is open to all at the Broadway Campus of Dudley College from 12.30pm on January 29.

Murder suspect appears in court

A MAN has appeared at crown court in connection with the death of a Stourbridge man.

Jobless Daniel Jones, aged 33, is accused of murdering 59-year-old neighbour Paul Tompkins in Forge Road, Wollaston.

Jones, of Forge Road, appeared at Wolverhampton Crown Court on Tuesday. He will return to the court for a plea and case management hearing on March 29. He did not enter a plea.

A trial is expected to take place in July.

Scores of tributes have been paid online to Mr Tompkins, who friends knew as 'Tonka'. His body was found on New Year's Day.

Anyone who can help the investigation is asked to call 101.

Cider festival to be held at new bar

A REAL ale 'micro bar' in a former shop unit in Stourbridge is holding its first cider festival.

The event at Barbridge in Victoria Passage, between Talbot Street and High Street, runs from today (Thursday) to Sunday, from noon to 1am.

Claudia opening eyes was the best present



15-year-old Claudia Visser, who was seriously injured in a suspected hit-and-run incident before Christmas

"WHEN she opened her eyes properly that was the best Christmas present you could ask for."

The words of the family of Stourbridge teenager Claudia Visser, who was left in a critical condition after a suspected hit-and-run last month.

Claudia, aged 15, was in a coma after the incident but when she finally woke step-father Graham Southall said it was a shining light in an otherwise 'awful' and heart-wrenching festive period for the family.

The brave teenager is now on the mend and hopes to be home within the next six weeks, although the road to full recovery remains a challenge.

Mr Southall, 49, admitted the family had feared the worst in the early stages.

He said: "It's completely life-changing for her and for the family."

Claudia, of Chaffinch Road, was initially taken to Russells Hall Hospital following the incident on December 17 before being transferred to Birmingham Children's Hospital.

Bedside

Mr Southall and Claudia's mother Simone have spent countless hours at her bedside since, while her father Patrick flew in from his home in Spain to visit his daughter.

The family and other well-wishers have now been given the news they wanted to hear as Claudia's condition has improved markedly.

However, she still needs another operation on her legs and will be in hospital until the middle of the February.

Currently she is also suffering from issues with her memory and could be wheelchair-bound when she finally leaves hospital.

Mr Southall said: "The first week or 10 days were awful - we didn't know if she was going to come out of the coma. But when she did it was amazing."

"When she opened her eyes properly that was the best Christmas

present you could ask for. Her friends have been to see her and about four or five days ago we gave her her phone back."

Claudia is due to have an operation at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, cannot walk or fully move her arms and is likely to need a prolonged spell in a wheelchair when she finally returns home.

Mr Southall said he anticipates it could be up to a year before she is fighting fit once again.

"Even when she comes out she will need about 12 months to get back to

normal," Mr Southall said. "We're actually lucky to have a bedroom downstairs.

"But as for the rest of it we don't really know at the moment. It's still a long road before we know what's going to happen."

Student

Redhill School student Claudia has told her mother and stepfather that she wants to get her back to her studies as soon as possible.

The teenager wants to be a solicitor and doesn't want to fall behind in her

studies as she approaches her GCSE exams.

Claudia suffered multiple fractures in both legs, a fractured skull, a broken wrist and collar bone, bruises to the brain and damage to her liver and spleen.

Car valetter Adnan Ajram, 24, of Careless Green, Lye, has been charged with causing serious injury by dangerous driving, failing to stop, being unfit to drive through drink or drugs and other driving offences.

He will appear in Wolverhampton Crown Court on March 14.

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MP worried by threat to landfill site funds

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has criticised Government proposals that could shut down an environmental fund that has invested £1.8 million in Dudley.

The Landfill Communities Fund (LCF) was established in 1997 to compensate local communities affected by landfill activity.

The scheme supports the work of local environmental trusts and has spent £1.8m on sporting facilities, social projects and the restoration of landmarks across the borough.

As a result of proposals announced in the Government's recent Autumn Statement the scheme is now under threat, Mr Austin said.

Concerns

The Labour MP has written to Ministers to raise concerns over the impact the scheme's closure could have.

Mr Austin said: "By deciding to put this fund in jeopardy the Government has proved yet again that investment in our area just isn't a priority."

"Projects like the improvements to Priory Park just couldn't have happened without this funding, so I'm raising my concerns directly with Government Ministers."

A tax on landfill waste was introduced in 1996 to reduce the amount of land-filled waste and to promote more environmentally sustainable methods of waste management. The LCF is a way for landfill operators and environmental bodies to work in partnership on projects to improve the lives of communities near landfill sites.

Singing astronaut talks about space

THE astronaut who sang the late David Bowie's Space Oddity while in orbit on the International Space Station (ISS), Colonel Chris Hadfield, is to give a talk in Birmingham next week.

The Canadian former fighter pilot will speak about his 35-year flying career, including an amazing five month stint aboard the ISS. On his last day at the space station, he posted a farewell music video online, strumming and singing his version of Bowie's Space Oddity. It has since been viewed over 26 million times, making him the most famous astronaut since Neil Armstrong.

Tickets are nearly sold out for his illustrated lecture at the Symphony Hall on Tuesday at 8pm. Call 0121 345 0600 or see www.tshh.co.uk

M6 slip road is closed for months

A MOTORWAY slip road near Birmingham has been closed to motorists for maintenance work lasting months. The M6 southbound entry slip road at Junction 5 near Castle Bromwich is shut until early summer.

His ambition was to teach music,



Club president Martyn Hall

TRIBUTES have been paid to a popular Rotary Club president in the Black Country who has died after a short illness.

Martyn Hall, who died on December 29, had been an active member of Stourbridge Rotary Club since 2007 and became president in July last year.

The 70-year-old, from Heath Lane, led the club in a range of fundraising and social activities over recent months.

Mr Hall moved to the Stourbridge area around ten years ago from the Bristol area to be nearer to family. Mr Hall leaves behind wife Sally and step children.

Mr Hall had a successful career in

the chemical industry before retiring to Stourbridge.

He had been an active member of the Rotary Club since 2007 taking on the role of club secretary before becoming president.

Fellow club member, John Savage, said Mr Hall was someone who always took part in activities and organising charity events.

He said: "He was an extremely popular man in the club, who virtually took on the role of club secretary as soon as he joined."

"He was the type of person who would get on with everyone."

"It is such a sad shock that he is no longer with us. He will be very sorely missed and all thoughts are with his family at this sad time."

Mr Savage added that the club would also be making a donation to a charity that Mr Hall supported.

"He was involved in several rotary charities, especially the White House cancer charity in Dudley," he said.

"Therefore the club will be making a donation to them at the end of the year in his memory."

Mr Hall's funeral will take place at Stourbridge Crematorium on January 22.

I love you Mum – the last words my son said

"HE said 'I love you Mum'. I said 'you never tell me you love me' and he said 'I just did'. I said 'Happy New Year son, see you in the New Year'."

Those were the heartbreaking final words of Tracey Betts to her 15-year-old son Callan just hours before he died on New Year's Eve.

Callan Fendall-Betts died from pneumonia less than a week after developing a cough.

The youngster, from Lower Gornal, had suffered a lung condition for six years and also had epilepsy but neither had a major effect on his day-to-day life.

His devastated parents describe him as a 'cheeky teenager who kept his sense of humour right to the end'.

The teenager had enjoyed Christmas before celebrating his first anniversary with his girlfriend two days later. He was looking forward to the future, having been accepted at Halesowen College.

Ambition

Callan had a malformed left lung for six years and also lived with epilepsy. But the conditions were managed and did not overshadow his life. His lung condition meant he was more susceptible to illness and his body less able to fight infections.

Father Mark Fendall said: "He was always active. He would do everything all the other kids did, running around and playing football in the garden.

"To look at him you wouldn't think there was anything wrong, he was just an ordinary lad. Even down to his sports day at primary school, he ran the 100 metres and did the last 10 metres backwards to show he could do it."

Miss Betts added: "He had to be careful. He was on antibiotics to make sure he didn't get colds or chest infections. He had regular check-ups. A cold for him could hang around. But it was not something we thought would limit his life in any way."

Callan was in his final year at school and looking forward to starting at Halesowen College in September.

His ambition was to teach music,



Callan Fendall-Betts, 15, of Lower Gornal, died from pneumonia less than a week after developing a cough

which his parents said was his love. He was a talented keyboard player and taught himself to play the piano using YouTube clips. He was also said to be 'totally smitten' with girlfriend Lizzie.

Mr Fendall said: "He was a joker. He took after me with his sense of humour, it was wicked and a bit naughty. He could make a joke out of anything."

Miss Betts said: "He was silly, funny, happy, loving. If you could dream about a child and pick all things for it to have, he had them."

It was only recently that Callan showed off his mu-

sical talent, at the Halesowen College open evening at Himley Hall where he played keyboard.

Miss Betts said: "He had never played publicly, he was always a bit embarrassed about it. That was the only time he ever played. That for us was a lovely thing to see. That was his love – music."

Teachers and pupils at Ellowes Hall Sports College wore blue ribbons in tribute at an assembly in his memory. The funeral will be held on January 20 but the location was still to be confirmed as The Chronicle went to Press.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Time to apply for a primary place

PARENTS across Dudley borough with children due to start primary school in September have been reminded to submit their school applications as soon as possible, if they have not already done so.

Children born between September 1, 2011, and August 31, 2012, are to start primary school this September.

Parents can apply for their choice of primary school online at www.dudley.gov.uk/admissions, or call 01384 814223 to ask for an application form by post. The closing date for applications is tomorrow (Friday).

Work to improve traffic under way

A FIVE-MONTH scheme to improve bus services and ease congestion around Merry Hill shopping centre began this week.

Traffic lights and bus shelters will be improved as part of the project, which is expected to cause delays in the area.

Work will begin in High Street and Coppice Lane in Quarry Bank. Work will then move on to Coppice Lane and The Boulevard. The scheme is due to be completed in June. Officials say it will improve journey times for both buses and general traffic.

Patient numbers rising at hospital

STRETCHED staff at Dudley's main hospital dealt with a record number of patients arriving by ambulance on one day this month, it has emerged.

A total of 135 patients were brought into the accident and emergency department at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley last Tuesday, January 5.

It was followed by another 120 patients on Wednesday, January 6, which was a sharp rise on the usual average of between 80 to 90 ambulance trips per day.

Successful kitchen firm is on the move

A KITCHEN retailer in Halesowen is moving premises within the town and creating extra jobs.

3D kitchens.net, based on Halesowen Road, will move to the site of the former Streetbike showroom on Mucklows Hill. A spokesman for the company said: "We currently have 13 staff but moving to new premises will see us create more part-time and full-time roles."

The building has been empty since Streetbike moved in October 2014.

Hall visit for couples

COUPLES can take a look around Himley Hall to see if it is the wedding venue for them. A free open day will be held next Sunday, January 24, from 11am to 4pm. Brides and grooms-to-be can tour the historic hall's rooms, which offer views down towards the lake and 180 acres of grounds.

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SIDDHARTHA Dhar, the British man suspected of appearing in the latest Islamic State murder video, was arrested in London in 2014. He was accused of belonging to the banned group Al-Muhajiroun and released on police bail. A few hours later he and his family simply hopped on a bus to Paris and then travelled to IS-controlled Syria. You may like to ponder this the next time some grinning security official confiscates your shampoo at the airport, or some pompous politician thunders on about "protecting our borders." Dhar's case is yet more proof that, whether undesirables are coming or going, Britain's borders are about as secure as a colander.

FOR four days the German media ignored an inconvenient truth. It was that on New Year's Eve a gang of up to 1,000 boys and men of North African or Arab appearance had poured into Cologne to rape, grope, mug and generally terrify women in what appeared to be a planned assault. The local police chief describes the outrage as "a completely new dimension of crime." There were similar incidents in other German cities.

A mass protest by women followed. Chancellor Merkel has expressed her disgust and the media have, at last, taken up the story ("Cologne inquiry into 'co-ordinated' New Year's Eve sex attacks" - Guardian, etc). It is bad enough that such a thing could have happened and been hushed up by the forces of political correctness. But it raises a truly terrifying question. If 1,000 alienated young males can organise an attack in the heart of a Western city for sexual purposes, what else might they do?

THE most worrying thing about Jeremy Corbyn's shadow cabinet reshuffle was that it was agonisingly slow. Assuming he ever got to Downing Street, how would this great thinker, debater, negotiator and all-round procrastinator react to a sudden crisis?

SWITCHED on the radio to hear some totally disconnected sound-bite? I tuned in to catch a debate on Marks & Spencer where someone was "getting his teeth into the women's wear issue."

**Don't miss Peter Rhodes
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THEFTS of copper cables and sheets have more than halved in a year across the West Midlands.

The dramatic drop has seen reported thefts fall from 84 in 2014 to 40 last year.

But the crime is still going unpunished in most cases with 59 cases resulting in no suspects being found two years ago and a further 34 in 2015.

By James Fisher

The combined figures, released by West Midlands Police through a Freedom of Information request, means more than 75 per cent of copper thefts have seen no prosecutions.

David Jamieson, Police Crime Commissioner at West Midlands Police, said: "This is a difficult crime to police but we will be making sure significant efforts are put in place to catch the perpetrators of those crimes."

Impact

"By working together with public and businesses we hope to continue reducing cable thefts. It is a serious crime that damages the economy and can have a huge impact on the people involved."

The Black Country has been blighted by copper thefts over the last few years with thieves targeting builder's merchants, properties and even churches and war memorials.

An amateurish plan to steal copper from a roof came unstuck in July 2014 when the wannabe thieves

had to be rescued by emergency services. The five men had climbed on to the roof of the old Shenstone House care home, Halesowen, and had started removing rolling up the copper before the police helicopter arrived.

In another case, thieves stripped the roof of St Matthew's Church in Walsall leaving a £400,000 repair bill in 2011. The theft left rainwater leaking through the roof.

Copper piping was ripped from the wall of a Black Country home, causing a gas leak and forcing five properties to be evacuated, the same year when some eight people were ushered from the rented flats in Malt Mill Lane, Halesowen.

Copper was also stolen from a Walsall war memorial while workmen were still carrying out repairs following a previous attack in 2010. Metal was stripped from the monument's roof at Barr Beacon causing £4,000 worth of damage.

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Megan's blossoming career



Megan Evans, of Rowley Regis, learning about gardening

A STUDENT is on the way to a blossoming career in gardening after gaining a place on a top course.

Megan Evans, 21, from Rowley Regis, has beaten 1,500 applicants to secure a place on the Homebase Garden Academy programme.

The year-long programme aims to develop the skills and knowledge of the students and have them work alongside award-winning garden designer Adam Frost.

Over 12 months Megan will spend time learning from Mr Frost about garden planning and design, working with top garden suppliers to develop her product knowledge covering planting and landscaping; and learn practical horticultural skills to earn a RHS Level 1 Award qualification.

As part of the programme she will also be working at Homebase in Oldbury, helping customers with their gardening dilemmas.

"I'm thrilled to have secured a place on the Garden Academy programme and we have already learnt so much," said Megan. "I've always loved gardening, so to be given the opportunity to turn my passion into a career is great."

A million visitors to leisure centres

MORE than one million people have visited leisure centres in the Dudley borough over the last 12 months, new figures show.

The figure is marginally down from the previous year, but bosses have praised the number of people who continue to stay fit and active in the borough.

Between April 2013 and March 2014, there were around 1.27 million visits logged to leisure centres in Dudley, Halesowen and Stourbridge. In the same period a year later there were more than 1.25 million visits.

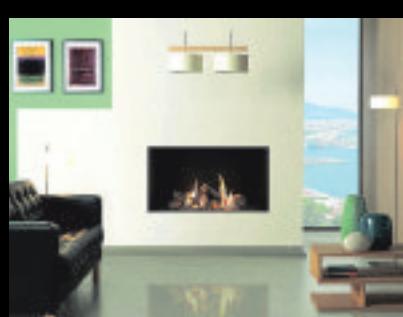
The council says an increase in the range of activities on offer, and a £1.5 million revamp of gyms has helped attract people.

Popular

Leisure boss Councillor Khurshid Ahmed has highlighted the schemes available to users. He said: "More than 1,255,000 visits were made to our leisure centres last year, which shows that our leisure services continue to be popular with people. There has been an increase of nearly 7,000 visitors to Halesowen and Crystal leisure centres and Dudley Leisure Centre has continued to attract hundreds of thousands of visitors despite competition from budget gyms."

"The centres have regularly updated fitness programmes to keep users motivated."

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Mountain of rubbish is to be cleared

WORK is at last under way to clear a huge mountain of rubbish that has been blighting homes in Brierley Hill for more than six years.

Waste once towered to around 40ft at the Refuse Derived Fuel plant, in Moor Street, leading to a campaign from councillors and residents to clean-up the huge eyesore.

The mound, which recently stood at around 19ft, led to a lengthy court battle to have it removed. The saga resulted in High Court action with company director Robert McNaughton jailed for failing to remove it.

However, contractors on Monday moved onto the site to begin preparations to start moving the waste, a process which will take several months.

Officials from the Environment Agency said that they have been working on the issue.

Marc Liddeth, environment manager at the agency, said: "We've been working closely with the landowners of the former RDF Ltd site to make sure the remaining waste is cleared, but not at the expense of the taxpayer."

"The landowners have agreed to fund the clearance of the site and it is expected it will take approximately eight months to clear the rubbish."

"We're informing local residents of these latest developments and would like to thank them for their support and patience."

Art event at library for a Blue Monday

A 'BLUE Monday' art therapy session is being held in Oldbury Library on Monday, January 18, from 10.30am to 1pm.

Call 0121 552 5933 for more information about the event at the Halesowen Street library, where visitors are offered the chance to try their hand at art and enjoy a cup of coffee.

Visitor numbers are up at the Black Country Living Museum

Golfers club together to help babies



Halesowen Golf Club captains Brian Coldrick and Elaine Povey with the cheque for the neonatal unit

HALESOWEN Golf Club Captains, Brian Coldrick and Elaine Povey had a very busy year both on and off the course.

At the start of the year they nominated the Neonatal Unit at Russells Hall Hospital as their Captains' Charity with a target to raise a minimum of £3,000 to purchase a phototherapy unit for the treatment of prematurely born babies with jaundice.

Their hard work in organising

various golf and social fundraising activities certainly paid off with the generosity of club members, donations and sponsorship from local businesses boosting the fund.

Brian and Elaine visited Russells Hall to hand over their proceeds of £7,055.40 to the staff in the Neonatal Unit, who were very grateful to Halesowen Golf Club for all of their efforts in 2015. The medics asked the captains to pass on their thanks to everyone

that had contributed towards such a magnificent donation.

The 2016 Captains, Ralph Dicker and Audrey Parry, have announced Halas Homes as their charity for this year. Halas Homes is a Halesowen-based charity that has been caring for people with learning difficulties for more than 50 years.

Captains also include Senior Captain Steve Wagstaff and Junior Captain Dan Povey.

VISITOR numbers are up by eight per cent at the Black Country Living Museum in the last 12 months — raking in an extra £500,000 to put towards new attractions.

A total of 292,530 visitors passed through the doors in 2015, up more than 50,000 in the past two years.

Bosses are remaining tight lipped on where the money will be spent but said it will help the 'future stability' of the museum.

Chiefs said they were delighted with the figures coming after a series of high profile projects, including filming for the new series of hit television show Peaky Blinders at the museum.

The upturn in figures comes after the attraction experienced a slump in numbers around four years ago.

Poor weather had hit numbers in 2012 which were 16 per cent lower than in 2011, which peaked at 298,965.

Recovering

Visitor numbers have markedly improved since 2012 when they stood at 249,574 and 2013 when they fell to 240,088.

In 2014 numbers were up to 271,467 and have risen again for the last 12 months, almost recovering to 2011 levels.

The museum's deputy chief executive, Laura Wakelin, said: "2015 was a very strong year for the museum."

"We're delighted, especially as it means we are now able to invest the surplus of £500,000 into the Museum to support future sustainability."

Popular events such as the 1940s weekend, bonfire night and Halloween are among the highlights in the calendar at the Tipton Road attraction, which has Victorian and 1930s streets.

Whodunnit play is right to go wrong

AUDIENCES at a school in Halesowen will be preparing for drama and comedy as the Open Door Theatre Company stages its latest play at the Furnace Lane school.

The Murderer of Checkmate Manor by The Farndale Townswomen's Guild will see dancing divas, collapsing sets and all manner of mistakes on stage in a play designed to go wrong.

It will be at Earls High School tomorrow (Friday) and Saturday at 7.30pm. It will be directed by Mike Smith and is described as suitable for all ages.

Tickets are £4 to £5 and can be reserved by emailing beakerman@btinternet.com.

The Open Door Theatre Company have been in existence for more than ten years and previous shows have included Romeo & Juliet, Terry Pratchett's Guards! Guards! and The Importance of Being Earnest.

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Spending lots on sink estates not the answer

FROM what we are constantly being told, you would be forgiven for thinking we lived in times of austerity, what with museums, libraries and police stations closing left, right and centre.

But when it comes to the sort of grandiose, 'legacy' projects that all politicians love, it is amazing how easy it is to find the odd £100 million or so. This week the Prime Minister pledged to end problems with crime, gangs, drugs and unemployment by splashing out £140 million on transforming Britain's 100 worst estates.

I think we know the drill. Spectacular footage of 1950s tower blocks crashing to the ground, 'partnerships' with construction companies, the mayor in a high-viz jacket laying the foundation stone. And a few months down the line, reports start filtering through about peaceful neighbourhoods disrupted by 'problem' families which have been relocated.

Do they really think it is that easy? Give the local gang leader a shiny new flat and solar panels, and he turns into a stalwart of the neighbourhood watch committee?

The sad truth is there are some people with a less-than-healthy attitude towards their neighbours, and they do have to live somewhere—somewhere that is nowhere near us. We don't need to demolish the sink estates, just move the law-abiding residents out. Leave the asbo families to fight it out among themselves.

WOLVERHAMPTON is not a city. The Black Country doesn't exist. And all the major towns of the West Midlands are really just suburbs of Birmingham.

Yes, that is the criteria of the not-especially thoughtful think-tank Centre for Cities, which argues that because the area between the West Midlands' major towns and cities are predominantly built up, they all count as a single economic area. And yet, because there is a strip of greenery between the Black Country and Telford, the new town actually does constitute a city, even though it doesn't have what most of us would recognise as a town or city centre.

They probably don't realise this, but in the rush hour you can drive from the Black Country to Telford in about half an hour, the same journey to Brum will take double, maybe treble that. So which will have the closer economic ties?

The worrying thing is, when we get the combined authority forced on us, it will be think-tanks like this advising local and central government on where the money should go. Just bostin, ay it?

SELF-appointed national treasure Stephen Fry has been chosen as the face to greet arrivals at Heathrow Airport, offering visitors tips on British etiquette.

They're missing a trick, as it would have been better to have used his film at the Jungle in Calais. It would put me off jumping in a refrigerator truck to Dover.



Angus Mitchell, one-time playboy and a skilled hairdresser



Perfect couple? – how they were portrayed in the public eye



Blonde beauty – Sian is now barred from leaving California

The model, billionaire and the custody fight

ROB GOLLEDGE looks at one Staffordshire family's fight for custody which could be straight out of a US soap opera

IT WAS the fairytale marriage of a girl from a Staffordshire village and a Hollywood tycoon.

But now model Sian Mitchell and her husband Angus, the heir to the one billion dollar Paul Mitchell beauty empire, are in a bitter legal battle over their divorce and the custody of their son.

Sian, from Great Wyrley married Mr Mitchell last year and gave birth to Dylan seven months ago. But 19 days later, divorce proceedings were taken against Mrs Mitchell.

She has been banned from leaving California with her baby by the US courts, meaning she is trapped in the West Coast state.

Mrs Mitchell's grandmother Pauline Morgan has said that she has had to 'pay the price for falling in love'. Mrs Morgan, from Love Lane, said she has not seen her granddaughter for 15 months. 'All Sian wants to do is to come to the UK for a holiday, yet these legal battles are forbidding her to leave,' she said.

Flown

'It has all happened so quickly, we are all in shock. They seemed incredibly happy together and even were due to have a separate marriage over here in November. They seemed perfect together. He would even call me Nan,' she added. 'It's heartbreaking. She's paying the price for falling in love.'

Because of the ban, Mrs Mitchell's family are yet to meet the new arrival. Her mother Debra has flown out to be with her.

The case has been raised for the first time by South Staffordshire MP Gavin Williamson. He has delivered a petition of 154 family and friends of Mrs Mitchell calling on the British Government to do all it can to assist her.

Mr Williamson told the Commons: 'My constituent Sian Mitchell moved to the United States last year, following her engagement



All smiles together, but now there is a bitter battle, with millions of dollars at stake

and marriage to an American citizen. Sadly, shortly after the birth of her son earlier this year, her marriage fell apart.

'Her multi-millionaire husband, Mr Angus Mitchell, has taken out court orders preventing Sian from taking her child out of the State of California until proceedings have been resolved, making it as difficult as possible for her to bring up her son in the way she wishes.'

'Sian is away from her family and relies on their emotional support during this extremely difficult time. She is desperate to return home to the United Kingdom with her child to allow her family to have the chance to meet this little boy for the first time.'

Mrs Mitchell grew up in Great Wyrley where she was known as Sian Morgan. She went to school in Brewood and was a member of the girl band ICandy which made it through to the X Factor boot camp in 2010. She was also

named Miss Coventry in the same year. She is now in her mid-20s.

Mr Mitchell, 45, was born into the legacy of late legendary hairstylist Paul Mitchell. He was educated by Vidal Sassoon stylists and started to craft his own signature style. He travels the world for hair events on behalf of Paul Mitchell. He lives in Los Angeles.

It is believed he met Mrs Mitchell while she was modelling in the States.

The Paul Mitchell luxury hair brand is reportedly worth more than £1 billion dollars per year.

Paul Mitchell was born in Carnwath, Scotland, in 1936, but was initially called Cyril. He went on to become a nationally-renowned hairstylist and moved to New York in 1960 after being invited by Vidal Sassoon and his empire was born. He died in 1989 aged 53.

His son Angus now runs the business with his father's original business partner John



Sian met Angus while modelling in the US

Paul DeJoria. The petition delivered to the Commons states: 'The petitioners believe that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Government should offer as much support and assistance to her as possible so she can return to the UK. The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Government to make representations to the US Government and the State of California to press the issue and get a resolution to the problem at the earliest possible stage.'

Mr Williamson added: 'This is an incredibly sad case and I have asked the Government to do all it can in offering consular advice to Mrs Mitchell and her family. Her family in Great Wyrley are desperate to meet the baby for the first time and concerned for Mrs Mitchell who is after all, a young woman caught up in legal proceedings in a foreign country.'

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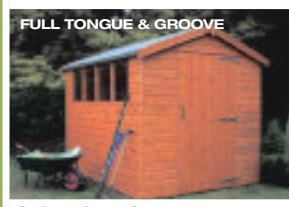
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Hippodrome can put town back on the map

B Osborne, Dudley, wrote no serious theatre company has applied to save Dudley Hippodrome in the last 30 years — the simple fact being that there was never any reason until now. It was never threatened with being demolished.

While singing the praises of council members, B Osborne fails to acknowledge that under these council members Dudley fell into decline.

It is disputed that the Hippodrome could be a wonderful business opportunity. How did they compile such evidence when other theatres are thriving

in other areas? Dudley was at one time a lively town, the shopping compared well with Birmingham and Wolverhampton, with thriving zoo, Hippodrome, even a small rollerdermo and cinemas.

If council members want to bring Dudley into the 21st century they need to revitalise it, not let it decline. Follow the example of other councils with leisure, entertainment areas, in some cases ice rinks — and their theatres are still part of the entertainment drawing in thousands of visitors.

The coming of the Metro line is an ideal opportunity to put Dudley back on the map.

B Osborne expresses concern about the looks of the Hippodrome, yet says nothing about how the area would look if it was flattened and the problems that could arise. Dudley has had more than its fair share of demonstrations over land.

It's not only Dudley that needs bringing into the 21st century, it's the council members who are responsible for its decline.

H J ROPER

Tipton

Corbyn's choice is a shambles

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chrons@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Ranting dog owners are a selfish bunch

WHAT a selfish bunch you are! The dog owners ranting about the 'dog ban' at Himley Hall.

Why should dog owners have the monopoly on the park? Maybe you need reminding it is a stately home, public grounds and gardens, it is not a dog park! Why shouldn't everyone enjoy it?

Your dogs may not have been any trouble, unfortunately this isn't always the case. I have seen many incidents over the years, a young child during a picnic being knocked to the ground distraught when a dog ran at the food. I was nearly knocked to the ground by two dogs, the owner couldn't have cared less. My son had to put himself between a dog and his young daughter who was in her pushchair, it doesn't bear thinking about what could have happened if he hadn't. Someone's dog was attacked by another dog although hers was on a lead. A lady who was disabled aside she was so nervous of the dogs running around she wouldn't be coming back, it goes on and on.

So you are upset that a third of the park will be a dog-free zone, well you have the other two thirds don't you, isn't that enough?

M J TAYLOR
Sedgley

A DRING
Kingswinford

Absurdity of gender neutrality

I SEE that Maria Miller has now turned her attention to the promotion of the transgender cause following on from her successful achievement with gay marriage.

Among her proposals is that nobody should declare gender so that everybody becomes gender neutral.

The absurdity of this, apart from being offensive to the majority of the gender normal population, was soon apparent on BBC's Newsnight, when one of the speakers pointed out that sexual equality, e.g. wage equality could not be monitored.

The other speaker, who was very pro the argument, said they did not want to be bound by gender.

Just what is meant by that escapes me.

I hope Miss Miller's constituents are satisfied that their interests are being protected while she is absorbed in this fringe subject.

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Top slimmer Rachel loses over six stone in the gym

AT a glittering ceremony on Saturday Halesowen's Rachel Gillies won the national award of Slimmer of the Year.

Rachel was chosen from hundreds of entries having lost more than six and a half stones in weight and an incredible 58 inches in just ten months — dropping from dress size 24 to 12.

But it was not just her weight loss which inspired the award panel to select her for the award. When Rachel first enrolled at Gymophobics in Halesowen she was struggling with severe back problems after surgery and had trouble even getting out of bed.

Steroid injections and comfort eating had caused Rachel's weight to balloon to 19 stone but now her body fat has dropped by some 43 per cent with a 15 point reduction in her body mass index. It has also dramatically reduced her cardio vascular risk factors.

Healthier

Rachel said: "I am over the moon to have won this award. My family are so proud of me.

"I am now fitter, healthier and happier. I can't stop smiling!"

Gymophobics is a nation wide group of ladies' weight and inch loss centres, owned and managed by franchisees under licence.

The Halesowen Centre is owned and managed by Andrea Withers and she, along with her team of instructors, give personalised programmes to each of their ladies, whose ages range from teens to 70 plus.

Rachel's award was presented at Stoke's Moat House Hotel in front of gym users and staff from across the UK. She will be an inspiration to the hundreds of members at the Halesowen centre, in High Street. For further details see www.gymophobics.co.uk or call Andrea on 0121 448 1743.



Rachel before



Rachel after

Chopper base to be scrapped

A POLICE helicopter base which serves three forces in the region will be scrapped this year in a bid to save money and ensure police air support is 'used properly'.

The National Police Air Service, which provides flight support to police forces across the country, recently confirmed it is closing 10 of its 25 bases.

It means the helicopter used to jointly serve Staffordshire Police, West Midlands Police and West Mer-

cia Police will now be based in Birmingham instead of at Halfpenny Green Airport, near Stourbridge.

The nearest aircraft available will attend requests for assistance instead of individual forces owning and operating their own helicopter.

Police helicopters are normally called out to help police find missing people or help in the capture of suspects using thermal-imaging camera which detect body heat while crews direct officers on the ground.

IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED YES TO ANY OR ALL OF THE STATED, THEN TO CHANGE THIS I NEED YOUR VOTE. VOTE FOR ME – DEAN EGAN AT THE NEXT POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONERS VOTING DAY IN 2016.

UNLIKE SOME OF MY CONTENDERS, I AM NOT CONNECTED TO ANY POLITICAL PARTY, THUS, NO PRESSURE CAN BE IMPOSED ON ME FROM THOSE RUNNING OUR COUNTRY, THUS, ANY INVESTIGATIONS OR DECISION THAT I MAKE, CANNOT BE INTERFERED WITH BY ANY POLITICAL LEADER.

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I AM HERE TO REPRESENT THE PEOPLE, THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THEIR VOICE AND WILL HOLD ANY OFFICER, NO MATTER WHAT THEIR RANK, RESPONSIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE FOR ANY COMPLAINTS WHICH ARE UPHELD. FORGET YOUR FORMAL WARNINGS FOR OFFICERS WATCHING EXPLICIT MATERIAL ON TAX PAYERS COMPUTERS WHILST BEING PAID FOR BY THE TAX PAYER, AND STAFF THAT ADJUST RECORDS TO SUIT THEIR OWN MISDEMEANOURS. THESE PEOPLE DESERVE NOTHING MORE THAN DISMISSAL AND I ASSURE YOU, IF I AM DULY ELECTED, THIS I WILL SEEK TO DO AND OBTAIN A POLICE FORCE YOU THE PUBLIC CAN THEN AGAIN PUT YOUR FAITH AND TRUST IN.

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Swimmer drowned after his heart failed

A PENSIONER from Halesowen drowned after suffering heart failure while swimming at a gym pool, an inquest heard.

Raymond Short, from Halesowen, was found at the bottom of a swimming pool at the DW Sports and Fitness centre in Kidderminster by a fellow gym member. He was pulled from the water by swimmers and a cleaner but was pronounced dead in hospital later.

An inquest at Stourport Coroner's Court heard how swimmer Stephen Parkins raised the alarm when the 79-year-old, of Blackberry Lane, failed to resurface on August 25 last year.

Mr Short, who used the gym twice a week, had been swimming under the water and travelled a length before stopping.

Mr Parkins told the hearing: "I swam to the far end of the pool and as I swam back I noticed movement under the water. I turned around to do another length and noticed he hadn't come towards me. He still appeared to be in the same position. I am deliberating for a few seconds thinking he should have been up by now. That's when I got concerned and alerted the cleaner."

No other gym staff were at the poolside apart from the cleaner but staff were quickly alerted and began administering CPR while they waited for paramedics.

Mr Short was taken to the Worcestershire Royal Hospital but could not be saved.

Worcestershire assistant coroner David Reid heard pool checks were carried out every 15 minutes. Reception staff checked CCTV every half an hour and someone would go to the poolside to check 15 minutes either side. Since the tragedy, pool checks have been carried out every 10 minutes.

Doctors concluded Mr Short drowned after suffering a 'cardiac arrhythmic event'.

Mr Reid recorded a verdict of accidental death.

Big Sam books his place in final



The autobiography by Sam Allardyce joins the story of Steven Gerrard's career on the prize nominations

DUDLEY-BORN football manager Sam Allardyce will join former England star Steven Gerrard on the list for the best sports autobiography of 2016.

Sunderland boss Allardyce will join the ex-Liverpool captain in competing for Autobiography of the Year at the Cross Sport Book Awards.

Allardyce has had a long career in football, taking Bolton to the Europa League as well as playing for West Bromwich Albion and Coventry City. His autobiography, Big Sam, charts his 43-year career, from his early days at the Sky Blues to his current position as manager of the Black Cats. He made more than 400 appearances, playing for Bolton, Sunderland, Millwall, Tampa Bay Rowdies, Coventry, Huddersfield, Preston North End, West Bromwich Albion and Limerick. In management he took charge of Limerick, Blackpool and Notts County before managing Bolton7.

The former Baggies assistant manager is nominated alongside 20-time Champion Jockey A.P McCoy, six-time world snooker champion Steve Davis and 1991 Formula One Champion Nigel Mansell.

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There will also be collaborations and work by an array of artists, designers, musicians and writers – from Andy Warhol, Shepard Fairey, Alexander McQueen and Ossie Clark and Martin Scorsese.

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Mud, sweat and tears to fight cancer



Glorious mud – fundraisers got Pretty Muddy at a new Race for Life event at Weston park in aid of Cancer Research

GET those trainers ready girls — it's time to give cancer a good kicking by taking part in the region's Race for Life events 2016.

Women of all shapes and sizes are being urged to get the New Year off to a great start by signing up now to the Cancer Research fundraising events.

The charity is calling on females to join the battle against cancer by choosing their event — Race for Life 5k, 10k or Pretty Muddy — and committing to take part at an event.

The charity has a series of 5k, and 10k races, which also feature an obstacle course, taking place in Dudley,

Wolverhampton and Walsall this summer. The races will be held from April to June, so women signing up now will create a goal to work towards.

Taking part is also a way of paying tribute to a loved one whose life was cut short by the disease and to celebrate those who have survived.

Katy Barley, Cancer Research UK's Event Manager, said: "Taking part is not about being fit or fast and participants can choose to walk, jog, or run around the course. The atmosphere is incredibly supportive.

"Pledging to take part, alongside thousands of like-minded women, can

be a great incentive to get fitter. Planning to raise money for life-saving research could prove more of a goal to get up and get moving than the usual New Year's resolution."

Last year, Race for Life Pretty Muddy took place for the first time at Weston Park. Katy said: "It has all the fun and camaraderie of our much loved 5k and 10k events but with added obstacles and, of course, mud."

Women who sign up for 5k and 10k events in January can benefit from a reduced fee of £10. To enter Race for Life visit raceforlife.org or call 0300 123 0770.

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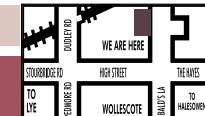
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£4k cost of open space impressions is criticised

DUDLEY Council has come under fire for spending £4,000 on impressions of how Castle Hill will look if the Hippodrome is bulldozed.

UKIP Councillor Dean Perks said he was astonished the authority had splashed the cash on the images, given it has not carried out any costings for the plan.

It has emerged sketches of the expanse of open space which would replace the Hippodrome cost the cash-strapped authority £4,000.

However, cabinet member Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said it was vital to have quality designs before any decisions should be made.

An eleventh-hour rescue bid to save the landmark venue has been launched but demolition still appears the most likely option.

Councillor Perks said: "I am astonished given Dudley Council's

financial situation to find out the artist's impression cost the authority £4,000.

"Another example of mismanagement? It appears so considering no costings for the demolition and open space have been done.

"Would it have not been prudent and beneficial to the students to ask Dudley College if they could have done it? I'm sure there are talented students that would have benefited from a real work-like project."

Dudley Council wants to demolish the Hippodrome and replace it with a public space. Council officials confirmed £4,000 had been spent on the artist's impressions.

Councillor Ahmed said: "In order for cabinet to be able to properly visualise the replacement scheme in their decision making it was vital to have quality designs."



Artists' impressions of how the public open space around Castle Hill will look without the Hippodrome

Burial fees will rise as council need more funds

BURIAL fees in Dudley will rise as part of a series of increased charges being introduced by the cash-strapped council.

The increase will be brought in as Dudley Council continues its battle to meet savings of £20 million over the next three years.

Among the fees to rise are the cost of exclusive right of burial on a plot, which will rise from £1,935 to £2,090.

Cremation costs will also rise, from £344 to £372.

By Andrew Turton

New fees will also come into force for a range of leisure centre and museum services.

Dudley Council officials, in a report, said every effort has been made to minimise the rise in pricing, and some fees have remained the same.

A report to Councillor Khurshid Ahmed said: "Increases are proposed to account for inflationary increases and pressures that individual services face, and are calculated at a level required to meet income targets set as part of the council's budget."

Inflation

"Specific services include amounts within their fees and charges, as they have in previous years, which allow for reinvestment in those services."

"Any increases are in line with inflation and every effort has been made to minimise increases and in some instances to hold prices at current levels."

Council chiefs said they had invested in bereavement services and facilities.

These include a £1.1 mil-

Tribute shows to legends of music

TWO major tribute shows are coming to the region tonight (Thursday).

The Simon & Garfunkel Story at the Robin 2 in Birstall is a tribute to the world's most successful musical duo, New Yorkers Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel.

Expect classics such as Mrs Robinson, The Boxer and Bridge Over Troubled Water in a show that recreates the 1981 Central Park reunion concert.

The show is also being staged at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre on February 13, Redditch Palace Theatre on April 1 and Solihull Arts Complex on April 6.

Meanwhile, the Johnny Cash Roadshow, with Clive John as the Man in Black, is at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre. It is a celebration of the country music legend's life and music.

There will be duets with Jill Schoonan as June Carter, the singer's partner on and off stage.

Health advice given at forum meetings

PEOPLE will be able to get top health tips at the next round of the community forums in Dudley.

Health and social care professionals will be speaking to residents at all of the 10 public meetings which run from January 25 to February 3.

They will be giving advice on keeping well over the winter months as well as talking about community health care services which people can access to avoid a stay in hospital.

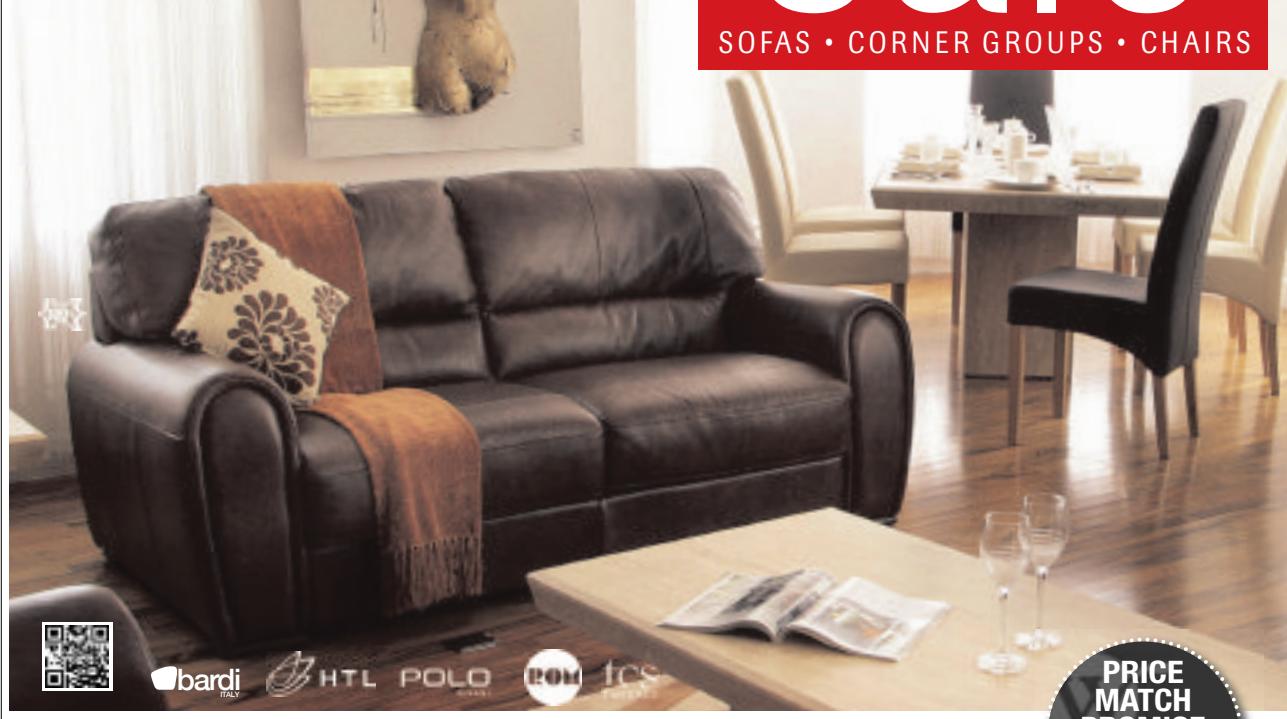
Councillor Pete Lowe, leader of the council, said: "People will be able to discuss issues in their communities with councillors who are only too happy to help."

The forums give people the opportunity to raise issues or concerns in their communities as well as discuss ideas for improvements.

The latest round begins on January 25 with Coseley East and Sedgley community forum, which takes place at Age Concern Sedgley, Ettymore Road. On the same night Gornal, Upper Gornal and Woodsetton community forum, will be at Lower Gornal Royal British Legion, Ruiton Street, Dudley. All the forums start at 6.30pm.

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Dental implants bring an end to hidden misery of failing teeth

Amy – not her real name – has secretly suffered with her teeth for 24 years, bravely smiling through her discomfort. Now free from oral problems, her smile holds another secret . . . thanks to one of dentistry's most creative procedure.

Amy doesn't need to say anything about her dental implants – her smile tells it's own obvious story.

Upbeat and bubbly, the Black Country care professional, who lives and breathes her work with the learning disabled, dispenses liberal amounts of infectious laughter and disarming smiles.

Youthfully middle-aged, she is confident, presents well and is clearly very proud of the achievements of her clients.

A live-in support worker, her sunny outlook and cheery disposition have regularly been challenged over the years.

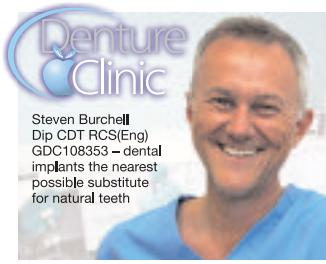
Surprisingly, it's not been the relentless pressure of her work, the major rebuild of her home, or the juggling of domestic duties with the demands of being a working mum.

Amy's own life-changer, she admits, have been her teeth. "It's been my secret for years and years, but on-one would have ever known."

Problems began to emerge 24 years ago after the birth of her daughter. "I had one abscess after another.

"The problem just kept on recurring and the

My secret smile...



Denture Clinic
Steven Burchell
Dip CDT RCS(Eng)
GDC108353 – dental implants the nearest possible substitute for natural teeth

gaps between my teeth began to increase after extractions to try to ease the problem." She adds: "I simply could not let any of this get in the way of my work. I have the best job in the world – certainly the most rewarding – and my current one-to-one client is an extension of my life."

A dental crisis with broken teeth brought the catalogue of hidden problems to a head and Amy booked an emergency appointment with Steven Burchell Dip CDT RCS(Eng) GDC108353, who heads the clinics at the North Street Dental and Implant practice in Dudley.

"I was totally reassured by Steven, felt comfortable and at ease as he explained to me the options and that implants could be the best solution," Amy recalls.

Issues regarding teeth and pregnancy are

well documented and in some women it can trigger oral problems.

Says Steven: "During pregnancy, increased hormones can affect your body's response to plaque – the layer of germs on your teeth – but I need to assure people that getting pregnant does not automatically damage teeth. The demands of pregnancy, however, can in some instances create havoc, as it appears to have done with this patient."

"Her problem has been resolved by using dental implants, one of the most creative options modern dentistry affords and the nearest possible substitute for natural teeth. Outcomes are generally very predictable."

The implant work has reshaped Amy's smile and face, something her daughter noticed immediately and is clearly evident from pictures displayed in her home.

For anxious patients, North Street Dental and Implant Clinic can offer intravenous sedation for those undergoing surgery.

"I know it appears strange, but up until having the implants, my teeth have affected the way I lived, my food choices – no toffee or peanuts – and my self-confidence. I used to speak with my hand in front of my mouth

where gaps had opened up between teeth at the side.

"If you look at the pictures of me with my husband my smile is nowhere near as wide as it is today. My daughter says I now smile all of the time," she says.

"I never have to worry anymore about the problems I've endured and getting the implants was really not that bad. I was back at work the next morning and no-one knew. It was certainly money well spent."

The implants were placed by Dr Owain Rees BDS, DGDP (UK) DIP IMP DENT (UCL), the clinic's implantologist.

With more than 25 years' experience as a dental implant surgeon, he initially worked as a house officer in oral surgery at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital. His surgical mentor

Alexandra returns to star in Sister Act



Singer and actress Alexandra Burke pictured when she starred in The Bodyguard in London's West End

ALEXANDRA Burke will be starring in a musical at her namesake theatre in Birmingham.

The X Factor winner, who went on to star in The Bodyguard in the West End and on tour, will play Deloris Van Cartier, a nightclub singer on the run from gangsters who hides out in a convent in Sister Act.

The hit musical, which was also a movie starring Whoopi Goldberg and Maggie Smith, will be at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre from September 12 to 17 in an all-new production from Leicester's Curve Theatre.

It is being directed and choreographed by Strictly Come Dancing judge Craig Revel Horwood.

Alexandra Burke, who was seen in the West Midlands in The Bodyguard at Birmingham Hippodrome last summer, will star as the saucy soul-singing addition to the nuns' choir in the comedy musical. It will have a run in the East Midlands this summer before going on tour.

See www.sisteractuktour.co.uk or www.atgtickets.com/venues/new-alexandra-theatre-birmingham for tickets.



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North Street's dental implant surgeon,
Dr Owain Rees BDS, DGDP (UK) Dip
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was the late Dennis Wedgwood MBBS BDS BDSRCS, consultant Oral and Maxillofacial surgeon.

"Very early on in my career I was exposed to implant work and placed my first implant in the late '80s. Since then I've had a special interest in this field of dentistry," says Owain.

In furthering his surgical skills, Owain undertook postgraduate implantology training with the Eastman Dental Institute. A further implant qualification followed in advanced implantology for experienced practitioners.

"It's a privilege to be part of this clinical success story," he adds.

"The name of the patient has been changed to preserve confidentiality . . . and her longstanding secret."

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£200k zoo revamp to bring animals closer



Big plans – Dudley Zoo's director Derek Grove by the flamingo enclosure which is set for a total revamp
THREE enclosures at Dudley Zoo are in line for a revamp costing £200,000 to bring visitors even closer to the animals.

Zoo director Derek Grove said it was part of an on-going programme of renovation work to the animal enclosures aimed at giving the creatures more space.

"The improvements to these three enclosures are the next stage of our site development plan and will benefit both our animals and our visitors," he said.

Experience

"The plans focus on the bottom part of our 40-acre site and will provide additional animals and facilities, from the moment visitors step through the gate."

The largest part of the project is the £120,000 work on the flamingo enclosure which will see a much bigger pool and a larger indoor area with a viewing area.

The £40,000 scheme to extend the baboon enclosure includes transforming a former shop building into a viewing area. The paddock, which is next to the zoo's vintage chairlift, will also be extended up the bank to provide more grazing area.

Plans to replace the Monkey Tails walk-through exhibit with the lorikeet experience are estimated to cost £40,000.

ADVERTISEMENT

Weddings at Himley Hall

Himley Hall is an eighteenth century Grade II* listed building set in 180 acres of 'Capability Brown' landscaped parkland. As the former stately home of the Earls of Dudley Himley Hall was a luxurious, up-to-date home, so fashionable that in the 1930's it was a regular weekend retreat for Royal visitors, including Edward, Prince of Wales. In 1934 the Duke and Duchess of Kent spent the first two weeks of their honeymoon at Himley.

Today, couples may marry where Royal newlyweds once took their honeymoon, and photograph their special day in the grounds where princes and earls once strolled.

Marriage Rooms

Himley Hall has three rooms licensed for civil wedding ceremonies. The Pink Room, once the Library of Himley Hall, overlooks the terrace gardens and has views towards the Great Lake. It is suitable for wedding ceremonies for up to 45 guests and has the added advantage of private access onto the terrace for photographs or refreshments. The elegant Green Room, originally the formal Dining Room of the Earl's of Dudley and complete with historic chandelier, also overlooks the terrace gardens with stunning views towards the lake. It is suitable for up to 75 guests. The Oak Room is newly licensed for up to 55 guests and looks onto the courtyard of the Hall with the added charm of wood paneling and a large oak fireplace.

Wedding Breakfasts

The celebration after your wedding ceremony completes your perfect day. Wedding receptions may be held in most of Himley's refurbished rooms.

The elegance of Himley is epitomised by the grandeur of its former Dining Room - the Green Room, complete with its

imposing 'air-twist' crystal chandelier. Wedding guests can celebrate in historic chic surroundings, enjoying window views overlooking the Great Pool. The warmth and intimacy of Himley's Oak Room, Himley Hall's former Billiard Room, offers guests the sophistication of a by-gone era combined with the cosiness of discreet luxury that sensitive restoration has created. The Green Room and Oak Room are available as part of a wedding package for smaller wedding breakfasts for up to 50 persons.

The North Wing

The North Wing, which once housed the Earl of Dudley's swimming pool and private cinema, has been transformed into an elegant Art-Deco style banqueting suite and lounge bar, perfect for larger wedding breakfasts and evening celebrations. Magnificent 1930's style bespoke lighting, period decor and stylish soft furnishings highlight the superb attention to detail which has established Himley Hall's North Wing as a dazzling venue.

The Swimming Pool room includes a dance floor and lighting, specifically designed for evening functions. It can cater for up to 90 guests for a seated meal and between 80-140 guests for an evening event.

The Cinema Bar offers a sumptuous retreat from the lively Swimming Pool during your celebration. Exquisite 1930's style cafe bar furniture sits adjacent to the 'birds-eye' maple and chrome bar, overlooked by images of stars of the silver screen from the Art Deco era.

Himley Hall Wedding Open Day - Seeing Is Better Than Imagining

On Sunday 24th January from 11am until 4 pm Himley Hall opens its doors for a special 'Open Day' and invites couples and their families to view the ceremony rooms exactly as they can be for their perfect day.

Because seeing reality is better than imagination, each of Himley's licensed rooms will be set out ready for a ceremony and the Swimming Pool Room and Oak Room will be arranged for celebration receptions, complete with floral decorations.

Experienced wedding co-ordinators and catering managers will be available to discuss options available to couples and Registrars from the Staffordshire Registration Service will be on hand to guide couples through the civil ceremony process at Himley Hall. The Weddings Open Day at Himley is free admission so why not pop in for a complimentary coffee and chat and see if Himley can make your 'perfect day'?

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Open Day

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2016 full packages available from £5,380



Three comics and dinner at club for £20

A NIGHT of comedy featuring performers from the Black Country club circuit will come to Stourbridge next Friday.

Comedian Jonny Cole is headlining the show at Stourbridge Rugby Club on January 22.

Cole, from Wednesbury, has attracted a legion of fans with his hilarious songs and observations on life in the Black Country. He is performing at the club's Stourton Park base, in Bridgnorth Road, with London comic Philip Simon and Dudley comedian Wayne Beese, who hosts the monthly Fitz of Laughter Comedy Club at Katie Fitzgerald's.

A two-course meal is part of the £20 ticket price. Club president John Slim said: "We hosted a similar event last January which was a complete sell-out. Tickets are being snapped up for this one too."

For further information, or to book, email rugby@stourbridgerugby.com, call John Slim on 07989786913 or the club office on 01384 395000.

New jobs at safari park

AROUND 200 jobs are going to be created at West Midland Safari Park as the attraction launches its latest recruitment drive.

The park is looking to bring in extra people in preparation for its summer season. Around 50 of the vacancies are within the theme park. Food and drink sellers, shop workers and admissions staff are wanted.

It comes as the safari park is preparing to undergo an £80 million expansion. A water park, 250-bed hotel, conference centre and spa will be built as part of the overhaul. Bosses say the development will transform the site into one of the top UK attractions.

Applications can be made at www.wmsp.co.uk/careers

30,000 in drug crime arrests but the figures are falling

Woof justice call over dog walk ban

ANGRY dog owners have signed a petition against plans to ban the animals from parts of Himley Hall.

Council bosses want to cater more for picnicking families and have placed signs around the 18th century attraction on the Himley Road warning of the changes.

The 'dog free zones' will see pets prevented from using open spaces stretching between the Main Gate and West Gate. The plans will come into force in February.

John Share, from Sedgley, said he had been walking his golden retriever around Himley for 15 years. He said people leaving rubbish were causing the main problems and that dogs should be left alone.

"We found out from one of the wardens just before Christmas," he said. "We didn't hear anything for a while, but posters have now been put up around the park saying it will come into force next month."

"About a third of the park will be closed off and a lot of people are not happy about it."

Catherine Molineux, of Coseley, who owns a white German shepherd, said: "You would think that with all the talk of council cutbacks they would have better things to spend the money on than silly schemes like this. It will ruin a great location for so many considerate dog walkers and it has been done without people being consulted."

Derek White, from Russell Hall, who walks his shih tzu Mitzi, at Himley said he was one of many dog owners considering cancelling their £50 a



Thumbs down - owners unhappy at the ban on walking dogs in Himley Hall grounds

used by many people and needed

cater for a variety of users.

"As the spring months approach we are looking to encourage more people and families to enjoy picnics and other relaxing pursuits in these lovely grounds," he said.

"We just can't understand the coun-

cil's reasoning behind this and also

how they are going to marshal it," he

said.

"A lot of disabled people use the

park to exercise their dogs but they

won't be able to let them off the lead."

Dudley councillor Khurshid Ahmed said the grounds of Himley Hall were

MORE than 30,000 arrests for drug possession, distribution and production have been made in the West Midlands since 2011.

The offences, ranging from cannabis possession to importing class A drugs, work out at 18 arrests a day between January 2011 and November 2015, according to a Freedom of Information request.

Of the total 34,223 offences which led to arrests, less than half, 15,612, have resulted in a person being charged.

The figures also reveal that the total of arrests relating to drug offences have reduced by a third since 2011, when 9,873 were made, to 2015 when 3,074 have been made.

The figures fell each year in between the two dates.

West Midlands Police Inspector Simon Inglis said the force had created various initiatives over the years to tackle drug crime.

Priority

He said: "Drug offences remain a key issue in many crimes and tackling the problem remains a priority."

"Recent operations such as Sandwell's Spring Safer Six prove this. The initiative - which was months in the planning - resulted in dozens of people being brought before courts. They are currently awaiting sentencing and the drugs seized have been destroyed."

"All our efforts to target drug dealers are balanced with work alongside drug support groups to get users the help they need to break the cycle of addiction."

The most frequent crime, possession of cannabis, saw 11,038 arrests made, however figures for that particular offence dropped from 3,440 in 2011 to 877 in 2015 - falling each year in between the two dates.

The number of arrests made for possessing cocaine, crack cocaine, heroin, LSD and MDMA also fell significantly.

Thousands of visitors at two mansions

TWO mansions near Wolverhampton have seen more than 115,000 visitors in the last year, new figures from the National Trust reveal.

Wightwick Manor House and Moseley Old Hall, both National Trust properties, have had tens of thousands of people pouring through the doors in 2015.

Wightwick Manor House, a Victorian mansion originally owned by Theodore Mander, saw 75,145 visitors. Meanwhile, Moseley Old Hall in Moseley Old Hall Lane, which is famous for a visit by King Charles II during his escape to France, welcomed 40,942 visitors.

Jo Armstrong from the National Trust, said: "We are delighted that visitor figures continue to rise year-on-year and at some places are record-breaking achievements."

Another popular attraction is the Birmingham Back to Backs, city centre homes literally built back-to-back around a communal courtyard in the 1840s.

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Jack Carter, aged 13, from Stourbridge, shows his dance moves



Thirty-year-old singer-songwriter Simon Lacks, from Bromsgrove, AKA Heinz-Sight



Audition hosts Warren Evans and Andy Dingley, of Base Studios and Video



The hopeful performers were filmed in action for the TV show's producers

Black Country's Got Talent

HIP-HOP dancers, a 20-piece school choir and singer-songwriters – they all braved the stage in Stourbridge with a burning desire to become the next star of Britain's Got Talent.

More than 100 musicians and dancers queued up at Base Studio dreaming of becoming Simon Cowell's latest protégé.

The official first round of the series saw producers from Thames TV take note of about 40 acts on Friday night who filled out their forms

and are now patiently waiting to see if they have successfully made it through to the televised section.

Among them was Jack Carter, 13, from Stourbridge, who attends Pedmore Technology College. He attended the audition with support from his father, Darren, and wowed the audience with a series of hip-hop dance moves.

"I was really nervous up there and all I could see was a big lens in my face," he said.

"I've always wanted to be a dancer and I try and copy some of the moves I see on YouTube."

Thirty-year-old singer-songwriter, Simon Lacks, from Bromsgrove, who goes by the

stage name Heinz-Sight, performed a song accompanied by his acoustic guitar song for the producers.

He said: "I think this sort of event is good for the community and it helps to get all these performances out there.

"For the youngsters it's a great experience – we're all hoping to become the next big thing."

"I've been a musician since I was about 17 and I've done it professionally for the last two years. I've released a few songs on Spotify, iTunes and Amazon and I'm working on a new album at the moment."

Studio owner Warren Evans said he was

first contacted by the producers of BGT two months ago and the excitement surrounding the TV show had seen its post about auditions on Facebook viewed more than 90,000 times.

"It's been a privilege to host something like this in Stourbridge," he said. "This is the first round and if they're successful they will be in front of the judges next time."

"There have been some great acts, including the 20 youngsters from a Roman Catholic school in Hagley."

"It's been a very proud moment for us and it's great to promote the musical heritage we have here in Stourbridge."

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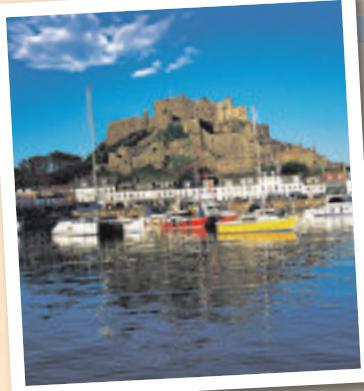
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Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

Kew Gardens Tree Tops Walk and Hampton Court

Two days departing June 18

PRICE FROM £139

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- Entrance to Hampton Court Palace, gardens and maze
- Single rooms subject to availability - supplement applies

Organised by Diamond Holidays (ABTA W0552)

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- Services of a tour manager
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Four days departing March 18

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* Price is for two people sharing a room
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Keukenhof Gardens and Flora

Holland and Belgium in Bloom

Four days departing April 15

PRICE FROM £239

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- Visit to Flora at Château de Grand Bigard
- Services of a tour manager
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fast theticket

Corrs Blimey

Irish pop family
are back – Page 23



**NATIVE
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Entertainment Unleashed



Heart-warmer

The Snowman – Page 23



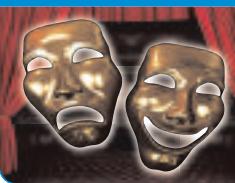
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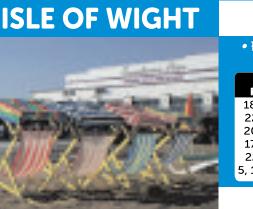


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Come back after ten years? Corrs we can

AFTER a decade away, The Corrs have returned with a new album and tour, including a concert at Genting Arena, Birmingham, on Tuesday.

Between 1995, when The Corrs released their debut offering *Forgiven, Not Forgotten*, and 2005 when their fifth album *Home* was launched, the band saw album sales of more than 40 million.

Then, the soft rock family band from Dundalk, took a ten year break for solo projects. Now Jim, Sharon, Caroline and Andrea are back together with a new album, *White Light*, which entered the UK charts at No 11.

The siblings have been busy promoting the record over recent months. Youngest Corr and singer, Andrea, has noticed the change of pace.

Babies

"Where am I? That's something I ask myself every day now," says the 41-year-old. "What am I doing here and where are my babies?"

Since the hiatus, Andrea's had two children — three-year-old Jean and Brett Jr who's just turned one — with husband Brett Desmond, who she married in 2009.

She says the band's reunion is only a recent plan, from January 2015, when Caroline suggested they try to write some new music.

"We all missed being in the band. We had gone off the radar, and there was no record company involvement or anything like that. No one knew we were going to make a comeback. But if one of us had reservations, we



The Corrs are making a triumphant return Picture by K Westenberg

wouldn't be here either. It's all four of us, or none at all."

After a couple of days in the studio, they had more than enough ideas. "And that's the only reason we're here," adds Andrea.

"If the music was no good, I wouldn't be back. We're so excited

about it, and playing together after 10 years not doing so."

By September, the quartet were on stage in front of 60,000 people at BBC Radio 2 Live in London's Hyde Park.

It will be worth turning up early to catch support group, rising star British country music duo The Shires.

Snow body does it better

CREATED by Birmingham Repertory Theatre 22 years ago, The Snowman has been delighting young and old alike for over two decades with its wonderful mix of storytelling, spectacle and magic.

Now, it returns to Birmingham Rep following a successful 18th festive year in London's West End.

Based on Raymond Briggs' book *The Snowman* and featuring Howard Blake's much-loved score, The Rep's production has been seen by over half a million people since it first came to the stage.

The enchanting show tells the story of a young boy's adventures when his snowman comes miraculously to life on Christmas Eve. Featuring a dazzling array of colourful characters, including dancing penguins, magical reindeer, a beautiful snow princess, and, of course, Father Christmas himself, The Snowman is a treat for all the family.

The Snowman first appeared as a beautifully illustrated picture book by Raymond Briggs in 1978. It has since inspired the classic Oscar-nominated, Bafta award-winning animated film, first broadcast by Channel 4 on Christmas Eve of 1982.

The magical stage production features Howard Blake's timeless musical score played by a live orchestra, and includes the signature song *Walking in the Air*.

The Snowman is the perfect introduction to theatre for the very young and is at the Centenary Square theatre from Wednesday (January 20) to January 24. The Snowman is directed by Bill Alexander and choreographed by Robert North with set and costume designs by Ruari Murchison.



Black Dyke bring the best of brass

THE world's most famous brass band comes to Birmingham for an afternoon concert on Sunday.

With 160 years of rich musical history, Yorkshire's Black Dyke Band is proud of its heritage but also looks to the future. Last year in Germany the Queensbury-based band represented England and won the European Brass band Championships for the thirteenth time. Black Dyke Band is the most recorded brass band in the world with over 350 recordings and most successful contesting band having won the British Open 30 times and the National Championships of Great Britain 23 times.

The concert is at 2.30pm at the Symphony Hall.

Comedians make it a funny start to year

TOP American comic and actor Kevin Hart, who starred in *Get Hard* opposite Will Ferrell and in *Grudge Match* with Robert De Niro and Sylvester Stallone, brings his *What Now? Tour* to the Barclaycard Arena tomorrow (Fri).

Andrew Lawrence, who recently had a Radio 4 sitcom, *There Is No Escape*, is at The Slade Rooms in Wolverhampton on Saturday, the same night Stephen K Amos plays The Old Rep, next to New Street Station in Birmingham. Expect politically incorrect humour when Jim Davidson brings his *Charlton Nil* show to Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Monday.

Magical music is a classical treat

ONE of classical music's most popular pieces will be brought to life when conductor Andrew Gourlay leads the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra through Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*.

The matinee performances will take place today (Thu) at 2.15pm and again on Saturday at 3pm.

Gourlay will conduct pianist Alexander Romanovsky and the CBSO at Birmingham's Symphony Hall. The programme will also feature Ravel's own little book of musical fairytale, *The Mother Goose Suite*, and Rachmaninov's jazziest concerto, *Piano Concerto No 4*.

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BRITTANY Ferries is riding a wave of success after announcing its most successful year in more than a decade.

More passengers are using Brittany Ferries as the gateway to western France and northern Spain, and the company is also becoming a major one-stop holiday provider.

The 20 per cent discount on holidays booked before February 9 and a modest deposit of £40 per person is proving popular with families, especially as they can further stretch the cost with the balance payable six weeks before departure.

Holidays in France, Spain and Portugal range from hotels and campsites to self-catering gites, cottages, paradores, apartments and villas.

Departures from Portsmouth, Poole and Plymouth, as opposed to negotiating the

By Leon Burakowski

chock-a-block M25-M20 to Dover, and the lure of often empty roads in Normandy and Brittany, instead of Calais and its problems, have won over families keen to avoid stress.

The holiday starts once aboard the cruise ferries with day and evening cabins available, or comfortable reserved seats, to ensure a relaxing experience — plus live entertainment, cinemas, shops, fine French dining or self-service restaurants.

Or from May to September there is a high speed service with the catamaran Normandie Express getting from Portsmouth to Cherbourg in as little as three hours.

Don't rush to your resort as soon as you reach the port because these coastal towns and cities are worth exploring, maybe on a short break or as a touring base. Favourites include Caen, a short distance from the

ferry port at Ouistreham, which is dominated by William the Conqueror's huge castle and has the lively buzz of a university city. It is also only a short distance from here to Bayeux with its museum based around the famous tapestry.

Le Havre was rebuilt after the destruction of the Second World War and is now a World Heritage site, a Maritime Metropolis famed for its 1950s architecture. Reached from Portsmouth via the 'Economic' service, this gateway to the Alabaster Coast is just a short drive — via the breathtaking Normandy Bridge over the Seine — to the picturesque harbour town of Honfleur, famous for art and seafood.

If food is high on the agenda, there is a quite amazing range of restaurants in the walled port city of Saint Malo in Brittany. The former haunt of infamous pirates is the place to sample the famous Breton crepes

and cider, and it also has lots of chic shops. Not far from Saint Malo is the magnificent and mystical Mont Saint Michel, another Unesco World Heritage site. The 24 to 32 hour services to Spain from Portsmouth link the UK with the bustling Basque city of Bilbao famed for the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the beach city of Santander.

Brittany Ferries operates routes to five destinations in Normandy and Brittany. Book online at www.brittanyferries.com or call 0330 159 7000. Brittany Ferries also has money-saving sail-and-stay offers — visit www.brittanyferries.com/offers. Brittany Ferries offers up to seven weekly return crossings from Portsmouth or Plymouth to Spain. Visit www.brittanyferries.com/holidays or call 0330 159 4700.

Pictures courtesy of www.calvados-tourisme.com and Brittany Ferries.

star extra TRAVEL London Theatre Breaks



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Rail inclusive breaks — Two or three days

Departures most weekends

Saturday Night Theatre from £169.95

Catch the Theatre Express and enjoy a super two-day weekend break in the capital. There's a choice of London hotels (hotel supplements may apply) and your ticket is for a Saturday evening performance.

Rail travel is standard class with the option to upgrade. Departs Saturday morning from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton, returning on the Sunday afternoon/early evening to give plenty of free time for shopping and sightseeing.

Theatre Showstopper from £239.95

This popular theatre package to the West End departs from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday morning returning on the Sunday afternoon/early evening.

Standard class travel is included with the option to upgrade plus two nights stay at a four-star London hotel of your choice (hotel supplements may apply). Includes a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance.

Coach inclusive breaks — Two days

Selected weekend departures

Saturday Night from £149.95

Theatre Weekend with Dinner from £159.95

Take in a top West End show and have some free time in London for shopping and sightseeing.

For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option see the matinee performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal. The Saturday Night option includes a ticket for the show to see an evening performance.

Both breaks include a theatre ticket, overnight stay in a four-star outer London hotel plus full English breakfast.

Pick-up points offered are Dudley, Shrewsbury, Telford, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

*The "from" price and price bands vary for each show — see brochure for details. Single rooms subject to availability — supplements apply.

Organised by Omega Holidays (ABTA V4782)



For a theatre brochure please call the promotions team on (01902) 319999 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm), or go to expressandstar.com/starextratravel

Please read brochure/web page for full information plus terms and conditions

CHOICE



Dermot O'Leary

The Getaway Car (BBC1, 6.50pm)

Dermot O'Leary takes five pairs of contestants to the South African countryside, where he puts their nerves, driving and communication skills – and their relationships – to the test in a series of high-octane car-based challenges. The most successful duo receive a chance to pit their talents behind the wheel against those of Top Gear's resident stunt-driver the Stig. Should they triumph, the winners will claim a £10,000 cash prize and the title of Getaway Champions. The contest gets under way as firefighter Matt and his wife Nicola, studio recording duo Sas and Grant, railway workers Wayne and Illy, long-term couple Vicki and Lindsey and newly engaged pair Manuela and Jamie take a spin on the show's circuit.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00 Saturday Kitchen** Live. 11.30 James Martin: Home Comforts. **12.00 BBC News:** Weather. **12.10 Football Focus.** **12.50 Saturday Sportsday.** **1.00 Live Snooker:** The Masters. Snooker players from Alexandra Palace, London. 4.30 Final Score. **5.10 Now You See It.** **5.40 BBC News.** **5.50 Regional Programme.**

6.00 **Healthless Celebrities:** Lizzie Armitstead, Steve Bobbin, Cousins, Rosemary Conley, Iwan Thomas, Katherine Merry, Dr Dawn Harper and Dr Pixie McKenna compete in a "health and fitness" edition of the quiz.

6.50 **The Getaway Car.** New series. Five pairs of contestants head to South Africa to test their nerves, driving and communication skills in a series of car-based challenges. Presented by Dermot O'Leary.

7.45 **The Voice UK.** The BBC's flagship singing contest continues as Paloma Faith, Boy George, Will.i.am and Ricky Wilson preside over the second of seven "blind auditions" in which they must select their teams by assessing contestants' vocal abilities alone. This time, the coaches hear from professional cage fighter Chase Morton, who sings on his way to bouts, and violinist-turned-vocalist Charley Blue. Plus, drag queen Divina DeCampo displays a unique voice and Liverpudlian Stevie Calow shows off the talents that once gave him a chance to sing with the Beatles.

9.05 **Casually.** Esperately searches a stretched-to-capacity ED for a bed to accommodate a critically ill elderly woman, and a young couple's plans to go travelling are halted by a car crash.

9.55 **The National Lottery Live.** Gaby Roslin presents as the all-important winning numbers are revealed.

10.05 **BBC News:** Weather.

10.25 **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Manchester City v Crystal Palace at the Etihad Stadium and Chelsea v Everton at Stamford Bridge; National Lottery Update.

11.50 **Snooker: The Masters – Extra.** Hazel Irvine presents.

1.50 **Weather for the Week Ahead.** **1.55 BBC News.**

BBC2

6.05 **Race to Super Bowl 50.** **(R) 6.55 Film:** **Wonder Man.** (1945) Comedy musical, starring Danny Kaye and Virginia Mayo. **8.30** **Death of The Prisoner of Zenda.** (1952) Adventure, starring Stewart Granger. **10.10** **Horror Under the Hammer.** (1970) Natural World. **(R) 12.00** **James Martin: Home Comforts.** **(R) 12.45** **James Martin:** Home Comforts. **(R) 1.30** **Bargain Hunt.** **(R) 2.15** **Escape to the Country.** **(R) 3.00 For What It's Worth.** **(R) 3.45** **Flog It!** **(R) 4.30** **Live Snooker:** The Masters. The concluding frames of the opening semi-final. **5.30** **Victorian Bakers.** **(R) 6.30** **Dad's Army.** Captain Mainwaring and his platoon are challenged to a cricket match by Warden Hodges, who has signed up a professional for his side. Featuring a guest appearance by former England and Yorkshire fast bowler Fred Trueman. Vintage comedy first shown in 1970, starring Arthur Lowe and Bill Pertwee. **(R) 7.00** **Live Snooker: The Masters.** Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the second semi-final from Alexandra Palace, London, where the line-up for the final will be confirmed over the best of 11 frames. **8.00** **Everybody Loves Raymond.** **(R) 8.30** **Everybody Loves Raymond.** **(R) 9.00** **Flash Gordon.** (1980) **12.10** **The Big Bang Theory.** **(R) 12.35** **Marvel's Agents of SHIELD.** **1.30** **Channel 4 Racing.** Live coverage from Wetherby and Chelmsford City. **4.00** **Come Dine with Me.** **(R) 4.35** **Come Dine with Me.** **(R) 5.00** **Come Dine with Me.** **(R) 5.30** **Channel 4 News.**

6.35 **Location, Location, Location.** Kirstie Allsopp comes to the aid of two friends who want to move to East London, and are pooling their resources in the hope of getting a shared house together. Phil Spencer helps a local woman, hoping to make an investment that will help her with her long-term goal of quitting her job and making a living as a yoga teacher. **(R) 7.30** **World's Weirdest Homes.** Charlie Luxton presents a guide to 20 of the most unusual residences ever built, before revealing what he considers the weirdest house on Earth. Residences featured include a skip that provides living space for an artist, a rotating house, a plane in the middle of a forest, a converted nuclear missile silo, a perfect replica of the family home from The Munsters, a house shaped like a giant beagle, a summerhouse by a frequently flooding river and an apartment block that looks like a giant snake. **(R) 9.00** **Film: Fast & Furious 6.** (2013) **(13)** **Premiere.** A gang of fugitives is reunitied by an FBI manhunter, who offers the criminals pardons in return for their help. They must go to Europe and bring down a criminal syndicate led by a ruthless London gangster, whose right-hand woman is an old friend of theirs assumed to be dead. Action thriller sequel, with Vin Diesel, Dwayne Johnson and Michelle Rodriguez. **10.20** **ITV News:** Weather. **10.35 Film:** **Lethal Weapon 4.** (1998) Action adventure, starring Mel Gibson. **12.50** **Jackpot247.** **3.00** **Murder, She Wrote.** **(R) 3.50** **ITV Nightscreen:** **Secret Agent.** **(R)**

ITV

6.00 **CITV: Fort Boyard Ultimate Challenge.** **6.25** **Pat & Stan.** **(R) 6.35 Dino Dan.** **(R) 6.45 Dino Dan.** **(R) 7.00 Signed Stories: Share a Story.** **(R) 7.05 Sooty.** **(R) 7.15 Super 4.** **(R) 7.30 Scrambled.** **(R) 7.35 Scrambled.** **(R) 7.45 Scrambled: Mr Peacock.** **(R) 7.50 Scrambled: Horrid Henry.** **(R) 8.10 Scrambled: Thunderbirds Are Go.** **9.05 Scrambled:** The Tom & Jerry Show. **(R) 9.25 Murder, She Wrote.** **(R) 10.15** **The Jeremy Kyle Show.** **(R) 12.20** **ITV News:** Weather. **12.30** **The Jeremy Kyle Show.** **(R) 1.30** **Judge Rinder.** **(R) 2.35** **Tipping Point.** **(R) 3.35 Don Martin.** **(R) 4.30** **Martin Lewis Money Show.** **(R) 5.00** **The Saturday Night Story.** **(R) 6.15** **Regional Programme:** Weather. **6.15** **ITV News:** Weather.

6.30 **New You've Been Framed!** Harry Hill narrates more viewer-submitted comical mishaps, including an unusual take on Ninja Warrior UK and a fine example of why bicycle seflies are a bad idea. **7.00** **Ninja Warrior UK.** Ben Shepherd, Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara host the fourth heat, as competitors from across the UK test their strength, speed and courage in the obstacle-course challenge. **8.00** **Take Me Out.** Paddy McGuinness lines up another selection of potential sweethearts for his 30 single women. This time, the love lift delivers Irish dancer Mitch from Bristol, diamond consultant Adam from Essex, Salisbury-based musician Nathan, and Rick, an ice hockey player from Blackburn. Each man sets out to impress the ladies, hoping they keep their lights on as a sign of approval, and Paddy provides an update from last week's couples on the Isle of Fernando. **9.20** **The Jonathan Ross Show.** Veteran actor Michael Caine visits the studio for his first British chat show appearance in nearly 10 years, along with Creed stars Michael B. Johnson and Sylvester Stallone. **10.20** **ITV News:** Weather. **10.35 Film:** **Lethal Weapon 4.** (1998) Action adventure, starring Mel Gibson. **12.50** **Jackpot247.** **3.00** **Murder, She Wrote.** **(R) 3.50** **ITV Nightscreen:** **Secret Agent.** **(R)**

CHANNEL 4

6.15 **How I Met Your Mother.** **(R) 6.40 The King of Queens.** **(R) 7.05** **The King of Queens.** **(R) 7.30 Ironman Switzerland.** **8.00** **Everybody Loves Raymond.** **(R) 8.30** **Everybody Loves Raymond.** **(R) 9.00** **Flash Gordon.** (1980) **12.10** **The Big Bang Theory.** **(R) 12.35** **Marvel's Agents of SHIELD.** **1.30** **Channel 4 Racing.** Live coverage from Wetherby and Chelmsford City. **4.00** **Come Dine with Me.** **(R) 4.35** **Come Dine with Me.** **(R) 5.00** **Come Dine with Me.** **(R) 5.30** **Channel 4 News.**

6.05 **Channel 4 News.**

6.35 **Location, Location, Location.** Kirstie Allsopp comes to the aid of two friends who want to move to East London, and are pooling their resources in the hope of getting a shared house together. Phil Spencer helps a local woman, hoping to make an investment that will help her with her long-term goal of quitting her job and making a living as a yoga teacher. **(R) 7.30** **World War II Battlefield Recount.** A journalistic team of excavation experts sets out to retrieve Second World War relics from the battlefields of the Eastern Front, telling the stories of fallen soldiers by examining their remains. **8.00** **Chasing Monsters.** Adventurer Cyril Chauquet visits remote waters to seek out the colossal goliath grouper, the world's largest marine fish, which can grow to more than 800 pounds. **9.00** **The Championship: Football League Tonight.** Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the weekend's second-tier matches, including a Yorkshire derby as Sheffield Wednesday met Leeds United at Hillsborough. **10.00** **Goal Rush: Football League Tonight.** Kelly Cates and George Riley present all the goals from League One and League Two, where fixtures included Bradford City v Oldham Athletic and Accrington Stanley v Portsmouth. **10.30** **Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of the famous housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to living alongside one another. **11.40** **Film: The Running Man.** (1987) A convict takes part in a brutal TV game show in which he is hunted by a series of gadget-wielding killers. Sci-fi action adventure, with Arnold Schwarzenegger. **1.30** **Hollywood.** **(R) 3.00** **Phil Spencer: Secret Agent.** **(R)**

CHANNEL 5

6.00 **Milkshake!** **8.55** **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.** **(R) 9.30** **The Saturday Show.** **11.35** **Police Interceptors.** **(R) 12.30** **Police Interceptors.** **(R) 1.30** **Film: Columbo: A Matter of Honour.** (1989) Crime drama starring Peter Falk. **3.00** **Nightmare Tenants.** **(R) 4.00** **Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild.** **(R) 5.00** **Ice Road Truckers.** **(R) 6.00** **World War II in Colour.** How Britain remained defiant after the retreat from Dunkirk, the development of radar and a breakthrough in cracking German codes that helped it win the Battle of Britain. **(R) 7.00** **World War II Battlefield Recount.** A journalistic team of excavation experts sets out to retrieve Second World War relics from the battlefields of the Eastern Front, telling the stories of fallen soldiers by examining their remains. **8.00** **Chasing Monsters.** Adventurer Cyril Chauquet visits remote waters to seek out the colossal goliath grouper, the world's largest marine fish, which can grow to more than 800 pounds. **9.00** **The Championship: Football League Tonight.** Kelly Cates and George Riley present extended highlights of the weekend's second-tier matches, including a Yorkshire derby as Sheffield Wednesday met Leeds United at Hillsborough. **10.00** **Goal Rush: Football League Tonight.** Kelly Cates and George Riley present all the goals from League One and League Two, where fixtures included Bradford City v Oldham Athletic and Accrington Stanley v Portsmouth. **10.30** **Celebrity Big Brother.** Highlights of the famous housemates' past 24 hours under the all-seeing eye of Big Brother, as they try to get used to living alongside one another. **11.40** **Film: The Running Man.** (1987) A convict takes part in a brutal TV game show in which he is hunted by a series of gadget-wielding killers. Sci-fi action adventure, with Arnold Schwarzenegger. **1.30** **Hollywood.** **(R) 3.00** **Phil Spencer: Secret Agent.** **(R)**

DIGITAL

BBC Three **7.00** **Don't Tell the Bride** **8.00** **Top Gear** **9.00** **Live at the Apollo** **9.30** **Film: Drive** **(2011)** **11.05** **Family Guy** **12.55** **Russell Howard's Good News** **1.25** **Live at the Apollo** **1.55** **Siblings** **2.25** **Film: Bedtime Stories** **(2008)** **4.00** **Close** **BBC Four** **7.00** **Stories from the Dark Earth: Meet the Ancestors Revisited** **8.00** **Castles – Britain's Fortified History** **9.00** **The Young Montalbano** **10.40** **Music Moguls: Masters of Pop** **11.40** **One-Hit Wonders at the BBC** **12.40** **Danny Baker's Great Album Showdown** **1.45** **Top of the Pops** **3.05** **Sounds of the Eighties** **3.30** **Close** **ITV2** **11.20** **Ninja Warrior UK** **12.20** **You've Been Framed!** **Gold** **1.50** **Film: What a Girl Wants** **(2003)** **4.00** **Film: Bean** **(1997)** **5.45** **Film: The Lost World: Jurassic Park** **1997** **8.15** **Beowulf: The Legend of King Beowulf** **9.15** **Take Me Out – The Group** **10.20** **Film: American Pie 2** **(2001)** **12.25** **The Keith Lemon Sketch Show** **1.20** **Reality Bites** **1.55** **Virat Cap** **2.30** **Total Bonkers** **Guinness World Records** **2.55** **Teleshopping** **5.55** **ITV2** **ITV3** **11.50** **A Touch of Frost** **1.50** **The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** **4.05** **Film: Columbo: Butterfly in Shades of Grey** **(1993)** **6.05** **Lewis** **8.00** **Storage Wars** **9.00** **Film: Assassins** **(1995)** **11.40** **Film: The Glimmer Man** **(1996)** **1.35** **Nitro Circus** **2.00** **The Professionals** **2.55** **ITV4** **Nightscreen** **3.00** **Teleshopping** **E4** **11.00** **How I Met Your Mother** **12.00** **Couples Come Dine with Me** **2.00** **The Goldbergs** **3.00** **Brooklyn Nine-Nine** **4.00** **The Big Bang Theory** **9.00** **Film: Role Models** **(2008)** **11.00** **Gogglebox** **12.40** **The Inbetweeners** **1.50** **The IT Crowd** **2.45** **How I Met Your Mother** **3.30** **Don't Trust the B**** in Apartment 23** **4.15** **Revenge** **Film4** **11.00** **The Frogmen** **(1951)** **1.00** **The Three Musketeers** **(1993)** **3.05** **Carry On Up the Khyber** **(1968)** **5.00** **Fast Girls** **(2012)** **6.45** **Tootsie** **(1982)** **9.00** **Contraband** **(2012)** **11.00** **Aliens** **(2014)** **1.00** **The Wolfman** **(2010)** **3.20** **Close**

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Crimes of the Mind, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Carolyn Raeburn signs her 16-year-old daughter Laura up for a few weeks of horse-riding lessons at a remote ranch, but the teenager ends up being brainwashed by a woman who grooms her to take the place of her own murdered child. Fact-based thriller, starring Christina Cox and Paula Trickey. (2014)

TUESDAY

The Heist, BBC1, 11.45pm

Roger, a security guard working at an American museum, discovers several pieces from a collection he has defended for more than a Determined to stop the sale from taking place, he enlists the aid of two like-minded guards in a desperate mission to steal the artworks. Crime comedy, starring Christopher Walken, Morgan Freeman and William H Macy. (2009)

WEDNESDAY

Good, BBC1, 11.45pm

A literary professor in 1930s Germany finds his work praised by the fast-rising Nazi party, and begins to enjoy the privileges conferred by their acclaim. Drama, with Viggo Mortensen and Jason Isaacs. (2008)



The Heist, Tuesday, BBC1, 11.45pm

THURSDAY

Virtual Lies, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A woman discovers her husband is having an affair over the internet. He is shamed into giving up the relationship and trying to save their troubled marriage, but the concerned wife soon discovers her online rival is dangerously obsessed with him and will stop at nothing to drive them apart. Thriller, starring Christina Cox and Marc Menard. (2012)

FRIDAY

You Only Live Twice, ITV, 11.10pm

James Bond is sent on a mission to uncover the truth behind the disappearances of Soviet and American space capsules before the mutually suspicious superpowers go to war. The trail leads to Japan, where Bond finally comes face to face with his arch-enemy Blofeld. Spy thriller, starring Sean Connery, Donald Pleasence, Akiko Wakabayashi and Bernard Lee. (1967)

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Joyce is still managing to have fun in the sun

With the departure of the Garveys at the end of the last season, many thought that ITV's sun-kissed comedy may have finally reached the end of its shelf life.

However, last week's hilarious series eight opener proved that there are still plenty of laughs to be had with the holidaymakers at the Solana.

Replacing the Garveys as the main family in the show are the Dawsons – Sheryn (Julie Graham) and Eddie (Steve Edge) – hoping for a relaxing holiday with their children Rob (Josh Bell) and Jodie (Honor Kneatsey).

However, in true Benidorm style, a peaceful time is not what they get, especially as Grandad Eddie Dawson (Bobby Knutt) tags along.

In tonight's episode, Eddie attempts to make amends with his daughter in law Sheryn, which is not easy. Julie Graham who plays the matriarch says:

"She's got a temper! She's not very pleased that Billy's father Eddie has gatecrashed the family holiday. It's putting her marriage under a huge strain. She feels like she's being made to hang out with a really annoying child."

"The theme running through the series with them is that Billy is trying to find the right moment to tell Sheryn that Eddie is going to move in with them back home. He's obviously putting it off because he knows what's going to react!"

Another former Solana resident, Tiger Dyke (Danny Walters), is back for a lads holiday and has brought his pal Joey Ellis (Nathan Bryon) along.

Tonight, the lads take a liking to new staff girl Amber, but do they stand a chance and are they simply in Spain for the sun, sea and sex?

"There's a bit of that, but the comedy comes from them being such fools," Walters explains.

"They are so innocent, it's not all about drinking and ladies. It's about two mates having fun and they get things wrong all the time."

Newcomer to the show, Bryon, agrees.

"They are both utterly useless to be honest," he says.

So there are few new characters on the Costa Blanca, but one old face

who has returned is Jake Canuso, who plays Mateo, the show's wannabe Lothario who is back, fresh from a short stint in Madrid.

In this episode, Mateo becomes the odd choice to run a staff first aid course. And stalwart Canuso is in no doubt that there is plenty of life left in the show, eight years down the line.

"It has real heart, it has craziness, jokes and the campness, but underneath all that there is a realness to the characters," he says.

"They all have their flaws and you get a glimmer of that every now and again."

"I also think the time of year that the show is on is perfect, as it's cold and dark outside and you switch on your telly and see sunshine and blue skies."

Of course, having great guest stars who are eager to frequent the Solana does hurt either. The likes of Shane Richie, John Challis, Michael Fenton Stevens, Frances Barber and Angus Deayton all cropping up in future weeks, while tonight's guest star is none other than legendary comedian and actor Roy Hudd.



Sherrie Hewson stars in Benidorm, Monday, ITV, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Silent Witness

BBC1, 9pm

Part one of two. An ex-convict is found murdered in his home and suspicion immediately lands on a recently released child killer. Nikki and the Lyell team are introduced to forensic psychologist Sasha Blackburn, who works closely with those released from prison on licence, as both the victim and one of the suspects are clients of hers. The investigators soon learn that it is not just the minds of these young men that are fragile, but their freedom is too. Forensic crime drama, guest starring Lyndsey Marshal and Niamh Cusack.

TUESDAY

Phone Shop Idol

BBC2, 10pm

New series. Britain's mobile phone sales force battle it out in 'Shop Idol' an annual industry competition, in a test of their technical knowledge, customer service and sales skills. Over six months, the salespeople will take part in competitive heats presided over by three judges, with the winner receiving a fast-tracked career. In the first edition, the most ambitious phone shop staff are selected to represent their company. Their customer approach is then tested in a secretly filmed visit.

WEDNESDAY

The National Television Awards

ITV, 7.30pm

The nation's most popular shows and stars gather at The O2, London for the ceremony celebrating the best of British TV over the past year. Viewers choose the winners via a nationwide poll, with TV talking points such as Pollock, Doctor Foster, Humans, Downton Abbey, Gogglebox, The Great British Bake Off, X Factor, and Strictly Come Dancing competing for honours. Includes special guest performers, plus Billy Connolly receiving the NTAs Special Recognition Award from Dustin Hoffman. Presented by Dermot O'Leary.

Bodyshockers: Nips, Tucks and

Tattoos

Channel 4, 10pm

A new year makes many want to try new things, such as get a tattoo or transform our bodies and faces in an attempt to stand out. But some folks like to take such things to the extreme as this show proves. There's a growing trend of irreversible tattoos, alarming sub dermals and huge breast enhancements, as Katie Piper reveals. She'll be chatting to

folks using ever more extreme ways to make their faces and bodies stand out. They include Amy, an animal lover who had her eyes tattooed black to look like a horse and her tongue split to look like a snake. We also meet Andrea, a party girl tired of her giant double-F boob job.

THURSDAY

Death in Paradise

BBC1, 9pm

There's rarely a dull moment for the models at a local fashion show, whether it's the pressure of quick changes between parading up and down the catwalk or the perils of tearing the odd dress. However, when Zoe McKay is strangled a few moments after leaving the catwalk, DI Humphrey

Goodman and his team are called in to investigate. As always the investigation proves to be far from easy. There are no apparent witnesses and a lack of DNA evidence. Kris Marshall and Danny John Jules star.



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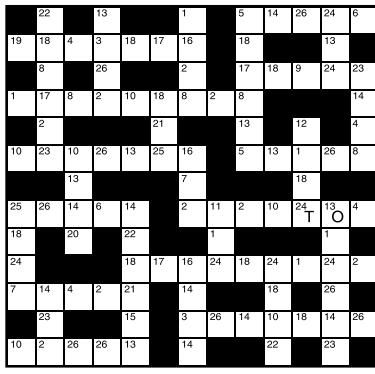
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Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	
M	G	L	U	X	I	A	F	T	N	W	P	O																
B	E	D	Z	Q	K	R	C	J	H	V	Y	S																

Quiz

- Who was the Roman goddess of peace?
- In which book by Dickens does Nathaniel Winkle appear?
- When is the first day of the grouse-shooting season?
- Who wrote the light opera Tales of Hoffmann?
- What, in communications, does the abbreviation STD stand for?
- Who directed the film *Orphée*?
- What is a Buff Orpington?
- Which composer wrote the symphonic poem *Finlandia*?
- From which country do the Ainu people come?
- In which ocean is the Banda Sea?

Last week's solutions:
Quiz: 1 Saturn; 2 In the North Atlantic between the Azores and the West Indies; 3 New York State; 4 Woodpecker; 5 In an air crash; 6 Soh; 7 The art of decorating or carving shells and ivory; 8 Sir Joseph Paxton; 9 True or reliable facts and information; 10 A collapsible opera hat.
Niner: VERACIOUS

Double Crossword

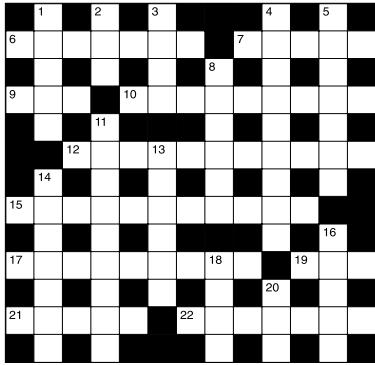
Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across

- Reading about a description of a wood, perhaps (7)
- Maurice has a heart of gold (5)
- An expert well served (3)
- Killer who gives one a close shave (3-6)
- Steals the child while it sleeps? (7)
- It's horrible fighting against the government (9)
- Martin hopes to mix, the very thing he hates (11)
- The sort of food people won't stand for (3-4,4)
- Happen to finish in the first three (4,5)
- Spot a little girl (3)
- Less than pleased with the contract (5)
- Has to row faster (7)
- A boring couple (5)
- Service gratuity (3)
- Apportion food, say? (4)
- Killer who gives one a close shave (3-6)
- Steals the child while it sleeps? (7)
- Base Shakespearean character (6)
- It's bawled out - and is unlikely to react tamely (4,5)
- Les gets mixed up with the law, too (2,4)
- Possibly a term in a tower (7)
- He gave people the law and doctors directions (5)
- Overcook fish (4)
- Enclosure in the post you open (3)

Down



Quick Clues:

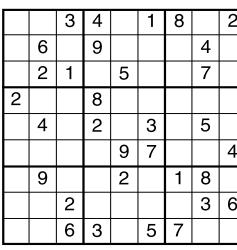
Across

- Hide (7)
- Tantalise (5)
- Charge (3)
- Melancholy (9)
- Changes of fortune (3-3-5)
- Tropical disease (6,5)
- Residing in (9)
- Overcook fish (4)
- Beneath (5)
- Clumsy (7)

Down

- Lid (5)
- Perform (3)
- Ignoble (4)
- Warship (9)
- Amaze (7)
- Interfere (6)
- Clapped (9)
- Ever (6)
- Dismount (7)
- Vigilant (5)
- Information (4)
- Possess (3)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that, every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >
5 8 6 9 4 1 2 3 7
3 7 4 2 6 5 9 1 8
2 1 9 3 7 5 4 6
4 9 5 8 2 3 6 7 1
6 2 4 1 9 8 3 5 2
7 3 8 1 5 4 2 9 6
9 5 7 1 3 2 8 6 4
1 4 3 6 9 8 7 5 2
8 6 2 7 5 4 1 9 3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Railway ticket; 8 Chairman; 9 Owls; 10 Steers; 12 Inline; 14 Scarred; 16 Glance; 18 Tomb; 20 Leap year; 22 Prefer a charge. Down: 1 Pathetic; 2 Plaice; 3 Palm; 4 Standing; 5 School; 6 Deal; 11 Saddlers; 13 No Standard; 15 Rebated; 17 Anyways; 19 Oars; 21 Ains; 23 Quill; 24 Access; 25 Battered; 26 Confront; 9 Asks; 10 Attend; 12 Ginch; 14 Propel; 16 Elapse; 18 Brat; 20 Cock-crow; 22 Disinterested. Down: 1 Reporter; 2 Settle; 3 Form; 4 Tentacle; 5 Rebate; 6 Dusk; 11 Delicate; 13 Customer; 15 Putrid; 17 Access; 19 Raid; 21 Care.

Thinking space

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

874 gives an animal,
219 gives a child,
37564 gives a holy man.



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Property

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING



Preparing for a sale in winter

DURING the winter, the housing market is renowned for being slower, with many people holding off on selling their property until the spring. However, by incorporating a few simple tips, sellers can make their properties look and feel more attractive, increasing the chance of receiving an offer during the winter, says the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA) Martyn Baum, president of National Association of Estate Agents, says: "Traditionally, properties are harder to sell during the winter.

"It's dark and cold and while homes don't look as attractive, we're less inclined to be proactive and search for a property – and this can leave sellers feeling in a stalemate position, waiting for the spring to kick in.

"Your estate agent should be well equipped to adapt to selling homes in these quieter periods but you can start by making changes as small as turning on a light or clearing out clutter."

The NAEA's top tips for those looking to sell their property during winter are as follows:

First impressions count:

The first seconds upon arriving at a property really impact the buyer's decisions, so clear your front entrance of any winter weather damage.

Winter can make the front garden and paths look dull and dirty, so ensuring these are clean and clear of leaves will improve the attractiveness of the property.

Bright and beautiful:

Ensure your home is well lit, this means simply checking all the bulbs are working prior to a viewing and switching them on, including any



outdoor lighting. You'll know which lighting looks best in your home so work with this, especially when viewings run into the evening. During the day you can make the most of natural light by ensuring all blinds and curtains are fully open and clutter is moved out of the way.

Warm and friendly:

It's important to make your house feel warm and homely; it will encourage potential buyers to stay longer and to be able to vision themselves living at home.

Smell is also important and each home smells different, so in order to not risk putting buyers

off, freshen up your home. Open the windows prior to the viewing to let some fresh air circulate – unless it's freezing – and display some freshly cut flowers... the old cliché of fresh bread or roasting coffee really does work as well. It is also advisable to accentuate any features that are particularly important in the winter such as a fireplace, which can be a real selling point of a home.

In the Garden:

A messy garden can signal the need for too much work and thus distract buyers; the winter weather can also tire garden furniture, which looks quite unsightly.

If possible, clear patio furniture away, if not, ensure they are securely covered. It is also advisable to trim back overhanging branches, particularly those blocking the windows in order to encourage as much light into the property as possible.

Be flexible:

With less daylight hours available for potential buyers to view your house, you should be as available as possible, for prospective buyers to view it when it's convenient for them. Your estate agent should help you work around these tricky daylight hours.

Tackle any winter damage:

Make sure any problems with the property that are more prominent in the winter – such as damp or a faulty boiler – are fixed prior to putting the house on the market.

Increased rainfall over the winter does take its toll on guttering, so check the gutters and drain covers are properly cleared of dead leaves and other debris, as leaky gutters and down pipes cause damage and are unsightly.

Flying off for the winter:

If you are going away for any period over the winter, the heating should be left on at a low temperature (minimum of 15°C), in order to prevent the pipes from freezing. If you are away for a long period and don't want to keep the heating on 24/7, make sure it is on a timer. Longer spells at a lower temperature can be more economical than shorter blasts at higher temperatures. This will ensure that there are no problems upon your return to be dealt with before showing to prospective buyers.

Benefits of using an NAEA member

The National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA) is the UK's leading professional body for estate agency personnel, being part of a group representing 16,000 members who practice across all aspects of property services both in the UK.

These include residential and commercial sales and lettings, property management, business transfer, auctioneering and land. NAEA is dedicated to the goal of professionalism within all aspects of property, estate agency and land. Its aim is to reassure the general public that by appointing an NAEA member to represent them they will receive the highest level of integrity and service for all property matters. The NAEA is a sister organisation to the Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA).

What makes NAEA members different? They are united in their drive to uphold professional standards within the industry and deliver an unrivalled service to their clients. With over 7,000 members, NAEA is the largest professional body of estate agents, which brings with it a responsibility of leading the way in making the industry safer and fairer for everyone.

By using a NAEA agent you are guaranteed:

That the agency has professional indemnity insurance

To be consulting with an agent who is either experienced or qualified who can give you up-to-date advice and guidance

That you are dealing with an agent who voluntarily follows the conduct

and membership rules laid out by NfOPP (National Federation of Property Professionals) regulation

That you have a route to independent redress.

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Sales & Lettings



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ABBEY ROAD, SMETHWICK

EXTENDED home overlooking WARLEY WOODS park with GARAGE & driveway. 15ft dining room & 17ft lounge leading to EXTENDED 14ft kitchen. 3 GOOD size bedrooms & bathroom with white suite. Lawn rear garden. GCH & UPVC DG fitted. EPC rating: F

BEARWOOD

£219,950



CONWAY AVENUE, QUINTON

WELL PRESENTED home on a corner plot at the head of a sought after CUL-DE-SAC. 14ft lounge & separate 13ft dining room. Kitchen to rear with d/s WC & side veranda. 3 good sized bedrooms & REFITTED bathroom. GARAGE & blockpaved driveway. Extensive lawn rear garden. GCH & UPVC DG fitted. EPC rating: TBC

QUINTON

£219,950



ST KATHERINES ROAD, OLDBURY

Traditional style EXTENDED home in popular CUL-DE-SAC position with VERY LARGE REAR GARDEN and NO UPWARD CHAIN, dg, gch, and offering SPACIOUS through lounge, kitchen, 3 GOOD SIZED BEDROOMS, study/box room, bathroom, GARAGE. VIEWING ESSENTIAL. EPC rating: TBC

BEARWOOD

£154,950



BLEAKHOUSE ROAD, OLDBURY

Deceptively spacious, semi detached property in popular location, WITH DELIGHTFUL GOOD SIZED REAR GARDEN, gas radiator heating, double glazing, having attractive lounge, dining/sitting room, kitchen, 3 BEDROOMS, shower/wet room, and DRIVE providing off road parking. NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC tbc.

QUINTON

£134,950



ARDEN ROAD, SMETHWICK

NO UPWARD CHAIN - REFURBISHED & spacious home with 2 reception rooms, 13ft REFITTED kitchen & REFITTED bathroom with white suite. 3 bedrooms & WC on first floor. UPVC DG & GCH fitted. MUST BE VIEWED - don't miss out. EPC rating: D

BEARWOOD

£129,950



THOMPSON ROAD, SMETHWICK

Deceptively spacious, thoughtfully improved intermediate terraced property, convenient position, with double glazing, gas radiator heating, having attractive lounge, re-fitted breakfast kitchen, 3 bedrooms, bathroom, rear garden. MUST BE VIEWED. EPC D.

BEARWOOD

£124,950



KINSEY ROAD, SMETHWICK

LARGE TOP FLOOR apartment with 2 DOUBLE bedrooms & study area. Having 14ft lounge diner leading to study area & FITTED kitchen. EN-SUITE shower room off bedroom one. Main bathroom also with a white fitted suite. ALLOCATED parking. UPVC DG & electric heating fitted. EPC rating: D

BEARWOOD

£120,000



WARRICK CLOSE, OLDBURY

NO UPWARD CHAIN. A deceptively spacious, well proportioned, 2 bedrooomed end terraced property occupying a pleasant position requiring some modernisation. Porch, Entrance hall, spacious through lounge/dining area, kitchen, 2 Bedrooms, Bathroom, Separate wc, and pleasant rear garden. EPC E.

BEARWOOD

£89,995



MILTON COURT, SMETHWICK

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Women seeking men

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

CHRIS, 40, attractive slim sophisticated redhead, seeking male 30-50 to relax with and get to know. Discretion assured. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420491

KATIE, 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+. Must be discrete. Married or single. ACA: Tel: 0906 515 3003 Box 419673

SALLY, 46, slim attractive feisty redhead, intelligent, easygoing, WLTW similar male for friendship and more, looks unimportant. ACA: Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 424075

DISCREET man wanted by married lady for no strings fun. I'm called Sarah and am 37yrs. PIs call, ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3007 Box: 418167

LOUISE, 47, youthful looking female looking for spontaneous male to put some love and lust back into life. Call me. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420445

JANE, young, 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3011 Box: 409715

ALEXA, 49 - slim, attractive, long-haired music loving female, with many interests including dining out, the arts, photography WLTW similar male. Text only to Mailbox no: 534662

MAUREEN, discreet sensual lady, 42yrs seeks daytime fun at her home. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3015 Box: 405297

YVONNE, simple mum, happy with life, but would like to meet someone to share fun times with. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420269

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3019 Box: 413399

CHLOE pretty single female 36yrs, dark hair/eyes, slim, very lonely and looking for reliable discreet male for mutual companionship maybe more. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420359

FELICITY, 38yrs, attractive, petite but shapey lady seeks gent for indoor activities! Age/looks/marital status unimportant but must be discreet and non demanding. Tel: 0906 515 3023 Box 420223

JULIE, 47, blonde brown eyes, size 12, varied interests, loves cuddling, kissing and showing affection, seeks similar energetic male friend for TLC. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420357

LOUISE, pretty, hairdresser, works long hours, finds it hard to meet a boyfriend, 34yrs, own flat. Text only to Mailbox no: 419257

ANN, 38, very attractive female, N/S, positive attitude to life. WLTW similar kind male with a lot of get up and go for romance and fun times. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420355

JENNI, single mum seeks single dad, own home, can accommodate and loves spoiling her man. Text only to Mailbox no: 411508

JACKIE lonely and looking for male company, 46-65. Need a bit of love and affection? Then I'm your girl, call me. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418169

SARAH, curvaceous brunette, 35, passionate nature, solvent, OHAC, WLTW male again, looking for male to make me out. Looks/Age unimportant. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420207

LYN, 43, divorced very lonely single mum, young looking, slim, attractive, WLTW similar male for companionship. Age/looks/Status unimportant. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418795

JANE, 47, voluptuous female, long hair, brown eyes, generous curves, would love to spend cosy nights in with that special male. Age/looks unimportant. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417985

SUSANNAH, 48, curvy female, romantic, warm and cuddly, seeks similar kind male for a loving relationship with lots of cuddles and kisses. Looks unimportant. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417341

LUCY, 32, blonde, tall and slim, looking for a casual fling, nothing serious. Discretion needed and assured. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420237

KELLY, young attractive vivacious 48y old lady, loves good food, cosy nights in/out, holidays etc, WLTW male for mutual companionship Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420195

CATHY, 42, good looking brunnete with a real passion for life, seeking male for happy times, dates, chats, romance and more. PIs call. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420175

TARA 22 tall slim but curvy with legs that go all the way up to heaven, WLTW very appreciative confident male for adult fun. Contact me anytime. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 414701

FEMALE dark haired 5'10, curvy, likes reading, walking, cinema, seeks male 40-50 for lasting relationship. Text only to Mailbox no: 507754

PROFESSIONAL black female age 52, enjoys evenings and days out would like to meet similar Midlands male. Text only to Mailbox no: 531590

CATHY, 42, good looking brunnete with a real passion for life, seeking male for happy times, dates, chats, romance and more. PIs call. Tel: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420073

VAL, 41, pretty, curly, flirty, seeks similar loving male for an uncomplicated no strings relationship. Age/looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 416601

MID naughty forties female looking fun, thrills and discreet meets, give me a call you won't be disappointed. Any age with own accommodation. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 409109

DIVORCED female, attractive, sensual by nature, OHAC, bawd with own company, looks to give life a little more exciting with unkindmed man. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418347

EILEEN, slim green eyed brunnete likes nice out and cosy nights in, seeks tall male who would make her laugh and brighten up her day. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 410847

FEMALE seeking gent 55-70, down to earth, nice and intelligent who knows how to treat a lady. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417195

LINDA, 47, brown-eyed blonde, caring, loving and honest, many interests, seeks genuine male to share lonely evenings with. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 417211

JOYCE, affectionate sensitive widow, bit of a romantic, seeks loving male for lots of TLC. Looks unimportant, this is what's in the heart that matters. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419143

DEBBIE, 29, looking for mature professional fun guy, 40-50 to spend good times with. Call me, you have nothing to lose. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419075

JULES, 30, sensitive, tactile, curvy, brunnete, honest, romantic seeks tall, loving male for fun, friendship and possible LTR. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419033

VIRGINIA, outgoing social female, 24, tall, slim and attractive, looking for fun times, maybe more. Can accommodate/travel. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418845

HEATHER, well travelled solvent brunnete looking to share a large glass of wine and whatever follows with affectionate man friend. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419031

LADY young at heart, nice eyes, seeks man 42-52 with good sense of humour. Text only to Mailbox No: 4881572

VIRGINIA, outgoing social female, 24, tall, slim and attractive, looking for fun times, maybe more. Can accommodate/travel. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418845

MALE, tall, slim, healthy professional, honest, easy going, seeks soulmate 45-60 for fun times and maybe romance. Derby area. Text only to Mailbox no: 5356842

LOOKING for the right chemistry with country loving gent who I am looking for some extra fun in their life. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 4186093

JOHN, 66, six foot three, salt and pepper hair, divorced, own business. WLTW a good long-term partner to travel and enjoy the good things in life. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420493

ATTRACTIVE professional lady, widow, 50's likes walks, sight seeing, theatre, meals out, sees genuine, professional gent, 5ft 9ins plus to make life more enjoyable. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418615

LONELY and broken male seeks female to show me what love is. Text only to mailbox no: 5345658

JOAN 35y old blue eyed blonde, outgoing, friendly, WLTW passionate guy to share good wine, good conversation, flirting and fun times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418609

SENSUAL tactile, attractive female, long blonde hair, blue eyes, loves walking, wine/dining, WLTW genuine male for mutual companionship. Looks unimportant Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418577

BROKEN hearted lady 39 seeks loving male to mend heart age 39/40. Text only to Mailbox No: 486916

KAY, very young 45, fit and active, no ties sees similar young at heart, fun male for fun meets. Age>Status/looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418577

VIVACIOUS strawberry blonde who just what she wants, looking for caring male for spontaneous full relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418445

WENDY, 40, slim, fit, bubbly female looking to meet a tall, slim, fit, mature male who thinks he can keep up with me. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 407915

HANDSOME guy, 49, sees attractive, younger female for fun times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 316752

TALL, dark, good looking male, 53, sees attractive female for daytime fun and exciting times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 299904

ATTRACTIVE male, 54, sees attractive female for daytime fun. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 317113

TALL, dark, attractive guy, 48, sees attractive female for strings fun times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420135

COLIN, five foot eight, blue eyes, bundle of fun to be around, likes growing fuchsias for showing, vintage tractor for showing, weekends away, going out and staying in WLTW a lady for friendship/LTR. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420089

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STEVE, 39, 5ft 9ins, medium build, likes walks, seeks female, slim-medium build, and days out. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 396709

6FT well built guy, nicely groomed looking for intimate nights or day with slim/medium build attractive lady 35-55. Text only to Mailbox no: 513246

ALAN, 56, tall, good looking, muscular build, five foot ten, fit, likes the gym, pubs, clubs and days out, seeks female with similar interests. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 419749

ATTRACTIVE, fit, sporty, tactile, youthful black male seek relationship with lady. N/S. Text only to Mailbox no: 4851641

WIDOWER, quiet, easygoing, slim, 5ft 7 tall, varied interests, seeks slim female, possibly relationship. Text only to Mailbox no: 513286

PHILLIP, 29 years old, 5ft 11ins, stocky build, green eyes, friendly, GSOH, bawd with own company, looks to give life a little more exciting with him. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 375056

SUBMISSIVE 44year old WLTW dominant female 25-30 years who enjoys role play with friend and maybe possible relationship. Text only to Mailbox no: 5084114

PHIL, 58, OHAC, from Wolverhampton, looking for a fun lady for a no-strings relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 4026265

GENUINE 56y old male, divorced, OHAC, looking for nice lady for friendship, maybe more. Wolverhampton. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 405551

CARING male, 57, OHAC, looking for female, any race, status and age for no strings discreet fun. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 411461

MARK, 40, 5ft 9ins, brown hair/eyes, attractive, good looking, OHAC/business, likes walks, day trips, cinema, sees similar female. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 348239

PROFESSIONAL male, 41, own business, likes to enjoy life, clubs, pubs, cinema, gym, sees similar female. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 362083

MALE, 45yrs old, self-employed motor trader/mechanic, medium build, green eyes, average looks. I am a nice genuine and honest person looking for similar lady to share a honest permanent relationship and happy times. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 418709

Men seeking men

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SINGLE gay man early 60s WLTW gay/big CD male late 20s to early 40s for good times and friendship. Gloucestershire. Text only to mailbox no: 4667184

MATURE male, GSOH, sincere, many interests, WLTW a younger male, 20-40, for friendship, can accommodate. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 420457

BI male, single widower, 58, seeks gay male friends from near Tamworth. Text only to Mailbox no: 4355756

BI curious Gloucester guy 36, slim, married, WLTW gay or bi male aged 60 to 75 for fun times. Text only to Mailbox no: 4930039

TALL male 57, sees older male 60 to 80 for adult fun. Text only to Mailbox no: 4347071

Women seeking Women

ATTRACTIVE full figure bi lady 58 seeks female of similar age for fun times. Cotswold area. Text only to Mailbox no: 4536475

36YR attractive black curly female seeking boyish female local for relationship. Text only to Mailbox no: 4493526

FEMME Lesbian, blue eyes, brown hair, looking for female. Age not important. Text only to Mailbox no: 4847797

MODERN young at heart lonely lady, 70s, likes trips out, holidays, seeking similar lady for friendship. Tel: No: 0906 500 3955 Box No: 410215

Friends

CALL CHARGES*: DATING 18+ and have the bill payer's permission. 0844 calls cost 7 pence per min, 090 calls cost £1.55 per min, plus your phone company's access charge. Calls are recorded and may appear on your bill. **TEXT***: Text alerts are charged at £1.50 per week. To unsubscribe to text alerts, text DATING STOP to 63333. To cancel free match alerts, text STOP to 0781474042. For full T&Cs go to www.localdates-terms.co.uk/. REPLY BY TEXT*: 08098/08990 costs £1.50 per SMS received (max 150 characters). Guaranteed up to 4 messages for each message you send. Service only available where phone icon shown. Messages are not met. To STOP text stop 08098/08990. Service provided by No Goats Ltd. Help: 0207 720 7130. ALL SERVICES*: By text any shortcode you consent to the owner of that shortcode sending you the occasional marketing message. To opt out of receiving these send NO INFO to 80088. DATA PROTECTION: Service provided by JMedia UK Ltd, SW14 7BX, 0207 720 7130. We will collect the details you provide and may send you details of other services and events operated by us. We may pass your details onto this newspaper for marketing or Phone PayPlus for regulatory purposes. Advertisers may come from our national database and from our pdc app. w/c 11/01/16

Astras playing role in F1

Top F1 driver coach, Rob Wilson, isn't the most sympathetic driver you'll meet. Since Vauxhall loaned him two ex-press Astras last April in which to train some of the world's leading race drivers, the cars have covered the equivalent of five Le Mans 24-Hour races, all completely flat-out at Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground in Leicestershire.

Rob Wilson is possibly one of the most important players in Formula One that you've never heard of, and is instrumental in carving split seconds from the lap times of at least 12 drivers who've been on the grid in 2015. Their skills are honed in two standard production Astras – a 1.6 CDTi 136PS diesel Sports Tourer and a 1.6T 200PS petrol GTC.



"The Vauxhalls will do everything that an F1 car does dynamically, just at a far lower speed," said Rob. This allows me to explain the physics behind what the car is doing on the track in real time.'

But as Rob swapped his beloved Astras for three models from the all-new generation range, it wasn't without some regret. 'The Astras have been as tough as old boots. Between them, they've covered over 16,000 track miles at Bruntingthorpe in the hands of successive F1, GP2, WRC, DTM and Indycar drivers, and they haven't missed a beat. They've chewed through 400 tyres and 40 sets of brake pads, but despite nearly 100,000 gearshifts and 43,000 severe braking manoeuvres, the cars are as nice to drive as they were on Day One.'

"I often have a driver's race engineer in the back seat and everyone has commented how comfortable the cars are, and how predictable and stable their handling is. The cars have an unbelievably hard time out on our track, so I need to know that they're not



Rob Wilson is possibly one of the most important players in Formula One that you've never heard of

going to break. I have tried other makes of car, but they've always suffered some kind of breakdown. I'm really looking forward to spending next year in the new Astras."

Rob has taken delivery of three new Astras this month – all SRi models, two 1.6 CDTi 136PSs and one 1.4T 150PS – and has already sampled one on track, taking three seconds off his best lap time in the outgoing car. "You can feel the benefits that up to 200kgs of weight-loss has brought straight away. My drivers are going to enjoy their training even more in 2016."

So what have Rob's Astras had to endure this year?

- 16,000 track miles at full race speed
- 7,250 laps of Bruntingthorpe Proving Ground
- 2,250 corners on the limit
- 43,000 hard braking areas driven through
- 95,000 manual gearshifts
- 400 replacement tyres
- 30 sets of front brake pads
- 10 sets of rear brake pads
- 10 front brake discs



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Swift SZ3 official fuel consumption figures in mpg (L/100km): Urban from 46.3 (6.1), extra urban from 64.2 (4.4), combined from 56.5 (5.0). Official CO2 emissions 116g/km.

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Evoque stays at top of tree

By John Griffiths

It was a bit of a surprise for some, but the trendy Evoque soon proved its critics wrong by selling 80,000 in the first year.

So perhaps the convertible version – which again divides opinion – will prove another big success when it appears in dealer showrooms in the spring.

The new version, with what is claimed to be the longest folding roof in the business but which still has room for four adults, will start at £47,500 – near the price of a fully stacked hard top Evoque.

Like the coupe, the convertible is Land Rover going boldly where it's never been before. So it's likely there will be plenty of interest in what is billed as the world's first luxury compact SUV convertible, which will come with four wheel drive and the option of manual and automatic gearboxes.

But it will also share something with the newly upgraded Evoque coupes – probably the lowest running costs in the sector, with fuel economy, CO2 emissions and running costs that would leave even some small family hatchbacks green with envy.

For, as part of its makeover, the Evoque gets the lightweight and highly efficient 2.0 litre Ingenium turbo diesel built at Jaguar Land Rover's Wolverhampton plant. It is 18 per cent more efficient than the 2.2 litre Ford engine it replaces, helping the Evoque to trounce the opposition on running costs – it isn't only its fuel economy but also the advanced Ingenium engine allows for much longer intervals between service – now two years.

The 150bhp, two wheel drive version with manual gearbox is capable of up to 68mpg according to official tests and a mere 109g/m of CO2 – making it the most efficient Land

Rover ever, and a class leader. The more powerful 180PS version is equally impressive, with figures of 59mpg and 125g/km of CO2. There is still a two litre, 240PS petrol for those who value ultimate performance over economy.

The test car was the £32,200 entry level with 150bhp, two wheel drive and a manual gearbox. It is well equipped as standard, but start adding some of the many option packs and the costs soon build up. This car, for example, had an upgraded navigation kit (£600), a panoramic sunroof (£900), a premium sound and connectivity system (£2,250) and a convenience pack (£1,800). The fully stacked, all singing, all dancing version comes in at £51,500.

Bearing in mind that this was still the entry level model, the Evoque instantly felt livelier, quieter and even more refined than its predecessor, perhaps because of the significantly lower weight and lower noise levels from the Ingenium engine.

It doesn't feel big or heavy on the road, more like a family hatchback in fact, and feels equally at home on busy streets, the motorway or country lanes.

The brakes on the new model are bigger and more powerful, and the chassis and suspension have been revised, providing a slightly more supple ride and sharper handling.

Style and status (that Range Rover badge) are undoubtedly big factors in the Evoque's success, but it is also very capable. Even two wheel drive versions have a raft of electronic helpers to keep you safe and on the move in bad weather, but all wheel drive versions have serious off-road ability which might surprise those who haven't experienced it.

New models now have the innovative 'All-Terrain Progress Control' seen on bigger, more expensive Land Rover and Range Rover cars. Just press the appropriate button (mud and ruts, snow and so on) and the car does the rest, constantly adjusting vehicle settings to maintain traction and make progress.



The refined nine speed automatic gearbox seen in other Jaguars and Land Rovers became an option last year. Nine gears might seem over the top, but it is responsive and means, for example, a lower ratio ideal if you venture off road and a higher 'top' for quieter, more refined cruising (and fuel economy).

From the outside, the new car is still instantly recognisable as an Evoque: it would be a brave man who changed too much on a car like this. But it does have a new front bumper with wider air intakes, a choice of grille designs and a new rear roof spoiler with built-in stop lamp. There is also the option of the company's first LED adaptive headlamps, which follow steering inputs allowing you to see deeper into corners.

But it's inside the Evoque where you'll see most changes, including new seats, new instrument binnacle and the new 'InControl

Touch' screen. It's a computer in the car which comes with a range of capabilities (and of course prices). The top of the range option fitted to the test car doesn't only control functions such as hands free phone, CD and DVD play, radio and navigation. You can also pair it up with a standard smart phone and use any 'apps' you have.

While the Evoque has always been a luxury SUV, it seems to have gone up a grade with improvements to the interior. You get an Oxford leather steering wheel with audio and cruise control buttons, electric, multi-adjustable front seats, rear seats with a centre armrest, grained perforated leather and satin brushed aluminium trim, and interior mood lighting. The automatic air conditioning, which has separate vents for the rear passenges, has an air quality sensor which automatically switches to automatic recirculation if detects

anything unpleasant in the air.

Driver aids include a heated front windscreen, electric windows and mirrors, heated front seats, front and rear parking sensors, lane departure warning and autonomous emergency braking.

The compact SUV sector of the car market is where manufacturers are currently doing battle for sales and that shows little, if any, sign of waning as barely a month goes by without a new model being launched.

But the Evoque, Land Rover's fastest selling model ever, has established itself at the top of the tree and this revamp will help to keep it there.

More luxury, more equipment and technology, more refinement and a better driving experience – yet with some of the lowest running costs. It has to be a formula for continued success.



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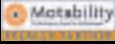
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Kia Optima's evolution

By James Parker

The fourth-generation Optima has a modern, new exterior, a bold interior design with more space for occupants, new technologies and a wide choice of efficient powertrains.

The new model offers greater refinement and improved ride and handling over the outgoing model, while retaining the sporty image that has helped Optima become one of Kia's best-selling models worldwide.

The Kia Optima plays an important role in the Kia Motors Europe product line-up, introducing the brand to an increasing number of new customers. Since the third-generation model launched in 2011, with its distinctive look, high-quality interior and high-tech image, the Optima has offered buyers something fresh and different in the D-segment.

The all-new Optima's evolutionary new look was designed to be functional and sporty, with exterior dimensions that are marginally longer, taller and wider. These changes enable a roomier and more comfortable cabin, with more head-, shoulder- and rear-seat leg-room and greater cargo capacity.

This model is the most aerodynamic Optima to date, with drag reduced from 0.3 to 0.29 Cd.

The all-new Kia Optima will be available in Europe in a choice of nine colours, with

alloy wheels ranging from 16-in to 18in diameter.

The material quality of the all-new Optima's cabin is significantly improved over the outgoing model, with a far higher proportion of soft-touch materials, as well as cloth and leather trim in natural tones.

Tasteful metallic accents throughout the cabin add a higher quality ambience to the interior.

The larger interior and exterior dimensions ensure that the all-new model is the most practical, spacious and comfortable. Cargo space has grown from 505 to 510 litres (VDA), with the under-floor storage area and a wider boot opening adding greater practicality.

High-strength

It features a uniquely engineered body which combines more high-strength materials than ever before, resulting in even higher standards of crash safety. While passive safety is improved, the new model is also equipped with a series of high-tech active and autonomous safety features, and Kia's engineers have targeted a five-star Euro NCAP safety rating throughout the Optima's development programme.

Kia's vehicle stability management is fitted as standard, ensuring stability under braking and cornering by controlling the car's electronic stability control and electric motor-driven power steering if it detects a loss of traction.

The Optima is available with a wide range of optional active hazard-avoidance technologies, depending on market.



The new model offers greater refinement and improved ride and handling

Improving ride and handling was a top priority for Kia's dynamic development teams, with a focus on delivering the ride comfort and stability customers expect from a D-segment sedan, while achieving the level of agility promised by the car's sportier appearance.

The all-new Optima debuts a number of new, advanced on-board technologies to improve usability, comfort and convenience.

The touchscreen infotainment system is paired with a six-speaker audio system as standard.

A powerful Harman Kardon premium sound system, featuring 10 speakers, an external amplifier and Clari-Fi MP3 restoration technology, is also available as an option.

The all-new Kia Optima will offer the company's unique seven-year, 150,000km warranty as standard.

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#Official EU-regulated test data are provided for comparison purposes and actual performance will depend on driving style, road conditions and other non-technical factors.

Cricketers given nod by county selectors

YOUNG Halesowen cricketers have attracted record interest from Worcestershire selectors this winter. The club have held a successful series of trials and an all-time high number of youngsters have been selected to represent the county.

A total of 16 players have got the nod in various age groups and club officials are thrilled with the achievement.

And there's cause for double celebration for Juhi Johal, Masharraf Shazad, Hayden Evans and Hassan Akram who have been selected for specialist development programmes as a result of their performances during the 2015 season in addition to county team involvement.

Halesowen's head of youth cricket Carl Bust said: "The volume of success that our players have achieved during the winter trials with Worcestershire is testament to their hard work and dedication."

"I am proud to be involved in the development of these lads and look forward to working with them with our team of coaches here during the 2016 season."

Halesowen Cricket Club start their winter training sessions this month. To take part contact cricketcoach@gmail.com

Worcestershire age group selection: U-10s Yusuf Khan, u-11s Elliot Evans, u-13s Rhys Evans, Tom Duke, Ubaid Khan, Mustafa Mumtaz and Alex Jordan, u-14s Hayden Evans, Charlie Greening, Hassan Akram and Talha Ikhlaq, u-15s Raheeb Khan, Archie Reeves and Nathan Hines and at u-17s level Juhi Johal and Masharraf Shazad.

Hagley open with a win over Enville

DUE to a late withdrawal, the WCB Indoor cricket league is reduced to seven at Kinver and for the first week of the competition only one match was scheduled.

Hagley (119-5) got off to a winning start against Enville 'B' (104) by 15 runs.

Hagley won the toss and batted first – openers Joe Lennon and John McDonnell both managing 25 before retiring.

Captain Paul Morgan was run out without facing, but James Russell contributed a useful 26.

Envilles openers Jono Howells (20) and Matt Grainger (25 no) got the innings off to a flyer, only losing the first wicket at 66.

On Grainger's retirement, captain Greg Tomkins and young Tom Davis tried to keep the total going ended 15 short.

Yozza looking to go one better

TIPTON'S Jamie Hughes is aiming to go one better the next time the BDO World Championship rolls around.

The dust is settling on the 2016 competition at Lakeside with Hughes a semi-finalist, ensuring his place for the next two years, writes Craig Birch.

'Yozza' bowed out 6-1 in sets to Scott Waites on Saturday's afternoon session, his fourth tie of the week in Frimley Green.

Monday's 3-0 whitewash of Ross Montgomery, Wednesday's 4-1 Downing of Madars Razma and Friday's 5-1 vanquishing of two-time semi-finalist Wesley Harms set up the Waites clash. The 29-year-

old, an industrial boiler engineer and site operative in the family business, is now planning to get himself more accustomed to the longer format and spend more time on the practice board, something he freely admits has been lacking.

He said: "I've always played competitive darts, I've never really been one for practising. After this, I need to have a think about that."

"I didn't prepare like I did the previous year, where I had a month off work as it was my Lakeside debut. I only got to the second round then."

"I need to get more used to the longer format, it was best of 11 sets against Scott and that's a long time at the oche. You need to maintain a decent

throw. I won't over-work on it, because I don't want it to affect my short game too much. This year has been great for experience."

"I'm booked up for the first part of next year, in terms of flights getting to the tournaments on the BDO calendar. It can take you all over Europe."

"But, now I'm definitely at the worlds for the next two years, maybe I can take my foot off the gas in the second half of 2016 and get properly ready for Lakeside."

"I need to be more dedicated if I want to reach the next level."

Fiancée Jayne was seen at Lakeside supporting him last week.

Jordanne hopes for a year to remember

WHEELCHAIR tennis player Jordanne Whiley has gone from strength to strength on the international circuit since winning Paralympic doubles bronze at London 2012.

And with the next Games looming large in Rio, the Halesowen star insists she will be pulling out all the stops to ensure she ends this Paralympic cycle on a high.

The first British woman to win a wheelchair Grand Slam, the first British female wheelchair winner at Wimbledon and the first British player to complete a calendar Grand Slam – Whiley has been busy etching her name into the record books over the last few years.

Another milestone came last September when she added to her 2014 doubles Grand Slam by winning her first Grand Slam singles title at the US Open.

And while the immediate focus is on adding to that tally in both the singles and doubles at the upcoming Australian Open, the 23-year-old can't help but let her mind wander to trying to add double Paralympic champion to her list of accolades.

Dream

"Last year was a great success for me, I just hope I have not peaked too early," she said. "I just want to build on that amazing success and keep getting the right results."

"I'm aiming for two gold medals in Rio, although my focus will be on the singles. It would be a dream come true if I could achieve that."

"Despite the success of last year, I've been working hard on improving my game to keep me at the very top, experimenting with tactics and things like that."

"I've got three Grand Slams before the Paralympics though with some other tournaments too."

"Hopefully I can start the year on a high at the Australian Open. I've got a few warm-up tournaments before but I'm feeling good at the moment."

Whiley was speaking as she helped to launch 'Supercharge ParalympicsGB' – a new campaign which allows the public to show their support for Britain's Paralympians over the course of 2016 and beyond through fundraising, donating funds



Wheelchair tennis champion Jordanne Whiley is looking for Grand Slam and Paralympic success

and taking part in dedicated 'Supercharge' fan activity. It is the first time the British Paralympic Association, a registered charity, has launched such a major public facing campaign to generate support and raise funds for ParalympicsGB and Whiley believes it will prove invaluable in the run up to Rio 2016.

"I did not expect the level of support we got for the Paralympics in London, it was amazing having all those people cheering for you," she added.

"I know first-hand the importance of having people behind you and encouraging you and it makes a big difference."

"The expectation levels are high for Rio following London but hopefully we can get some good success."

People can help #Supercharge ParalympicsGB to Rio 2016 and beyond. Show your support for the team and find out more at www.paralympics.org.uk/supercharge

Unbeaten Clarke in tough task on return

UNBEATEN Halesowen boxer Lennox Clarke tops the bill in a Walsall Town Hall card next month.

Clarke, yet to lose in nine bouts, has barely dropped a round since turning professional 26 months ago and is aiming to make 2016 a big year.

But he faces a tough task against Harlow's Richard Horton in an eagerly-anticipated eight-round clash on February 19.

Hatton Promotions and Black Country Boxing are joining forces again to bring the top class boxing show to the area.

The promotional outfit hosted three successful events during the final months of last year and will pick up where they left off at Walsall Town Hall with a nine fight card – packed with undefeated boxers.

Clarke tops the bill. But the seasoned Horton will be a tough test. Horton, aged 34, has won nine of his 14 fights and has contested a title on no less than three occasions.

The undercard of 'Undefeated' will also feature the Ricky Hatton-trained trio of Wednesbury's Sam Evans, Nathan Gorman, from Nantwich and Market Harborough's Reuben Arrowsmith. All are back in action against as yet to be confirmed opponents.

Also appearing are West Bromwich heavyweight Matt Gorman, highly-rated Swadlincote prospect Zach Parker, Old Hill's stylish Manny 'Pac Man' Zaber, Stoke's Kieran McLaren and Birmingham puncher Luke Herod Walker.

General admission tickets are £30, VIP ringside at £60 and can be purchased on 0845 111 2900.

Heathens on track for ticket sales record

CRADLEY are closing in on breaking their club record for speedway season ticket sales.

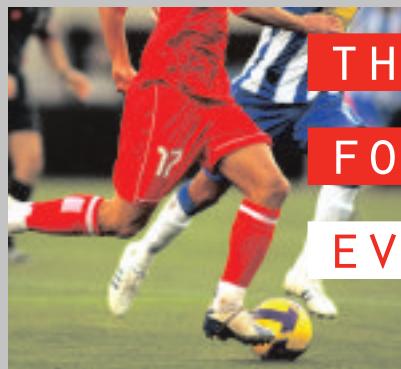
The club have also confirmed they are taking their season launch night back to Cradley Heath.

The riders and management will be on hand at Cradley Heath Liberal Club, High Street, on March 21.

The evening will feature interviews with the team plus the exclusive reveal of the new-look 2016 race jacket – one will also be available for auction and there will be a host of raffle prizes.

All profits will go to the team to assist with their pre-season set-up costs. Admission is £5, ticket only in the first instance, because of the limited capacity at the Liberal Club, and available via cradleyheathens.co or from the club shop, Printworx, Market Square, Cradley Heath.

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DK have to
dive deep
for victory

Walsall 22 DK 29

DK were surprised at the good condition of the Delves Road pitch. However, if the rain that started just after full time had been during the game things may well have been different.

A Duncan Tompkins penalty gave DK and early 3-0 lead, but Walsall benefited from two DK handling errors to bag two tries and go into the break 12-3 up.

Not for the first time this season there must have been some wise words at half time, for in the third quarter of the game DK raised their game and in effect took it away from Walsall.

The first significant attack of the second half Shef Shillingford put through a gap in the Walsall midfield making 60 yards before the defence could halt his progress. But a pass to the supporting Tompkins saw the full back put a low kick into the Walsall 22. The defence put it out before TJ Gordon could pounce. From the ensuing line out, DK stole the ball setting up a driving maul that saw James Fildes over for the try, converted by Tompkins.

Moments later DK were back in the same corner. This time the ball had been shipped to TJ Gordon on the wing who made good ground towards the line. He passed back inside to Shillingford who drove for the line, but was stopped inches short. However, Tompkins was running a great support line to take the ball and go in for the try, converted by Tompkins.

The third quarter was finished off by a try for Shillingford, with the extras added by Tompkins. DK were searching for the bonus point, but were hit by a breakaway try.

The bonus point duly arrived when Shillingford touched down for his second try, Tompkins adding the extras.

Walsall were rewarded with two bonus points from another breakaway try.

Defeats avenged and promotion hopes maintained

Caldy 10 Stourbridge 15

STOUR'S trip to the Wirral saw them looking to consolidate their challenge in the National 2 North promotion race and avenge a run of three narrow losses against the hosts.

Stour's top try scorer, centre Joe Healey, opened their account after seven minutes and winger Josh Trinham increased the advantage with a try converted by Tom Mitchell.

Caldy responded on 21 minutes with a converted try for tighthead Derek Salbury after a short-range lineout catch and drive.

A tackle offence on Caldy's 10metre line saw Mitchell extend Stour's lead with a well-struck penalty seven minutes into the second half.

Caldy laid siege to the Stour line, the defenders losing Toby Handley for 10 minutes to a sin-binning.

But Caldy's tactics of kicking penalties to the corner failed to produce results against a tireless Stour defence and they resorted eventually to the goalkicking of centre Gavin Roberts who kicked a goal back to 15-10 with just 10 minutes to go.

Clarke in tough
bout on return
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Jordanne hoping
for an ace year
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Skipper Dale puts Town on the spot

Halesowen Town 0 Blyth Spartans 1

HALESOWEN lost out to a second-half penalty from Blyth captain Robbie Dale but matched the league leaders for work-rate in manager John Hill's 150th league game in charge.

The Yeltz suffered an early blow when right-wing outlet Ashley Parsons-Smith limped out of game after just 12 minutes and neither side registered a shot on target in the first half, although Halesowen's Kaiman Anderson blasted just high and home substitute Mike Turner glanced a header wide.

The league leaders visibly moved up a gear after the interval and home goalkeeper Shaun

Halesowen Town

Rowley saved a long range free-kick from Dale before gathering a curling effort from Michael Richardson in the heavy rain.

Captain Dale then smashed home Blyth's winner from the penalty spot in the 66th minute after he had his legs clipped by Jay Denny.

Visiting goalkeeper Adam McHugh was called upon to tip a dangerous 70th minute free-kick from Aaron Griffiths over the bar as Halesowen responded.

However, the Spartans almost increased their

lead in the 77th minute when Richardson worked clear on goal but Rowley made a fine save and seconds later Rowley touched a blistering shot from substitute Paul Robinson onto his crossbar.

Halesowen's best chance finally came in the 90th minute when full-back Luke Connolly cut from his right and his curling shot hit the top of the bar with Blyth goalkeeper McHugh rooted to the spot.

Halesowen Town: Rowley; Connolly, Griffiths, Denny (c), Hull, Parsons-Smith (Turner 12), Charlton, Bragoli (Forsyth 79), Anderson, Melius, Gueyes (Lewis 75). Subs Not Used: Morrison, Westwood, Blyth Spartans: Morris, Naylor, Nicholson, Watson, Buddle, Hutchinson, Wade, Dale (c). Subs Not Used: Morse, Mullen, Otte. Referee: Guy Stretton. Attendance: 481

Stamford in battle to pull back deficit

Stamford 2 Stourbridge 2

STOURBRIDGE surrendered two precious points when second from bottom side Stamford snatched a sickening 95th minute equaliser.

The Glassboys failed to clear from a last-gasp corner allowing substitute Chris Hamilton to hammer home and steal a share of the points.

Stourbridge appeared to have victory in the bag when they went 2-0 up just after the hour mark. But they let that advantage slip.

Stamford took the lead on 27 minutes when right winger Matt Dodd darted between two defenders and set up striker Karl Hawley to turn and fire home past Stamford goalkeeper Enol Ordóñez.

Stamford came storming back but were kept at bay when Stourbridge goalkeeper Charlie Price pulled off two great saves within the space of 60 seconds to keep out Jake Duffy and then Elliott Hodge on the half hour mark.

Stamford's bad luck in front of goal continued on 51 minutes when Stourbridge full back Kristian Green was judged to have pushed Jordan Smith but Price saved Lee Beeson's resulting penalty attempt by guessing the right direction.

Stourbridge increased their lead on 61 minutes when Chris Lait picked out Hawley, whose shot was blocked but fell perfectly for Lait to follow up and slot home.

The advantage was short-lived with Stamford clawing a goal back three minutes later when the luckless Green turned a right wing Newman cross into his own net.

In the 95th minute the Glassboys failed to clear from a corner and the ball found its way through to Hamilton, who was waiting at the back post to pounce.

Ben fails in Gamble on race prediction

TIPTON Harriers' Ben Gamble was too quick for his own good in the Stafford Harriers 'Limp Wrist' race at Castlefields. Gamble was first of the 118 entrants to complete the course in 26.43, but finished down the standings due to race rules.

The event requires athletes to make a pre-race prediction of their finishing time. They then run the five-mile course with no timing devices – the closest to their prediction is the winner.

The ruling saw Gamble finish 37th after he came home 48 seconds quicker than his prediction. Jack Hodkinson (Stafford Harriers) won, with Tipton's Richard Rea fifth, six seconds ahead of schedule.

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UPHILL TUSSLE FOR OLD HALES

Old Northamptonians 28 Old Halesonians 21
THIS was on paper a five-point win for the visitors but someone forgot to tell the hosts.

The opening exchanges favoured the visitors. Set scrum and open play took the game to the home side. A line out close to the home 22 saw Tom King collect; a driving maul ensued with hooker Sam Jones scoring an early try, converted by Chris Hooper.

Injury to fly half Oli Rayner within a few minutes of the start was the first disruption, he was replaced at 10 by Ben Barkley.

Old Northamptonians responded with a penalty. But Hales still looked in control until, following a minor altercation between Dave Hadkiss and the home scrum half, Hales prop Matt Young was red carded for throwing an unnecessary punch at the home number 9, who was yellow carded.

Although replacement Rob Butler did a fine job to steady the tight, the home side took advantage elsewhere. A converted try gave them a 10-7 lead and the home side made the most of the numbers, scoring another try before a converted Luke Smith effort.

The second half was a real challenge for Hales playing up the slope. More injuries saw hooker Jones retired hurt which meant all replacements had been used. With the visitors reduced to 13, Hales were forced to instigate uncontested scrums. It was an uphill battle against 15 and a converted try gave the hosts a 22-14 lead, extinguished by two penalties.

A serious injury to a home player led to a stoppage and an ambulance called. Play continued on an adjoining pitch, when a Smith try, converted by Hooper, reduced the arrears.

Kidderminster 2nds 12 Old Hales 2nds 48

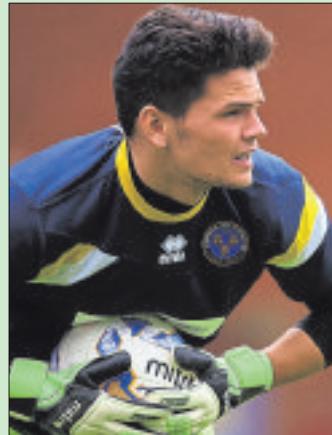
OLD Hales were grateful for this friendly away game following the postponement of their home league game against Lutonians.

Jon Harris opened the scoring for Hales. However, Kidderminster replied with a converted try.

Three more Hales tries followed, from Jamie Leech, Jay Reid and Pete Fitzgerald, two converted by Jake Shellis.

Reid scored a second, converted by Shellis, who added the points to Andy Holloway's try and then scored one of his own. A Kidderminster try preceded Old Hales' eighth, from Matt Weaver.

Duo keen to help Yeltz push on



Keeper Shaun Rowley, from Shrewsbury



Fellow Yeltz loanee Kaiman Anderson

taken to me well since I'm scoring goals. They're very vocal as well which is what you need."

The 18-year-old is hoping that, unless required at his parent club Shrewsbury, he can see out the rest of the season at The Grove.

Goalkeeper Rowley shared his team-mate's ambitions, saying: "I think play-offs are the aim and I'm certainly looking to get there."

"It's going well here at the minute. I'm just getting games in and showing what I can do."

"I'd be happy to stay and get as much experience as I can."

"With there being so many good keepers at Shrewsbury I think it suits both parties for me to be here as long as I can."